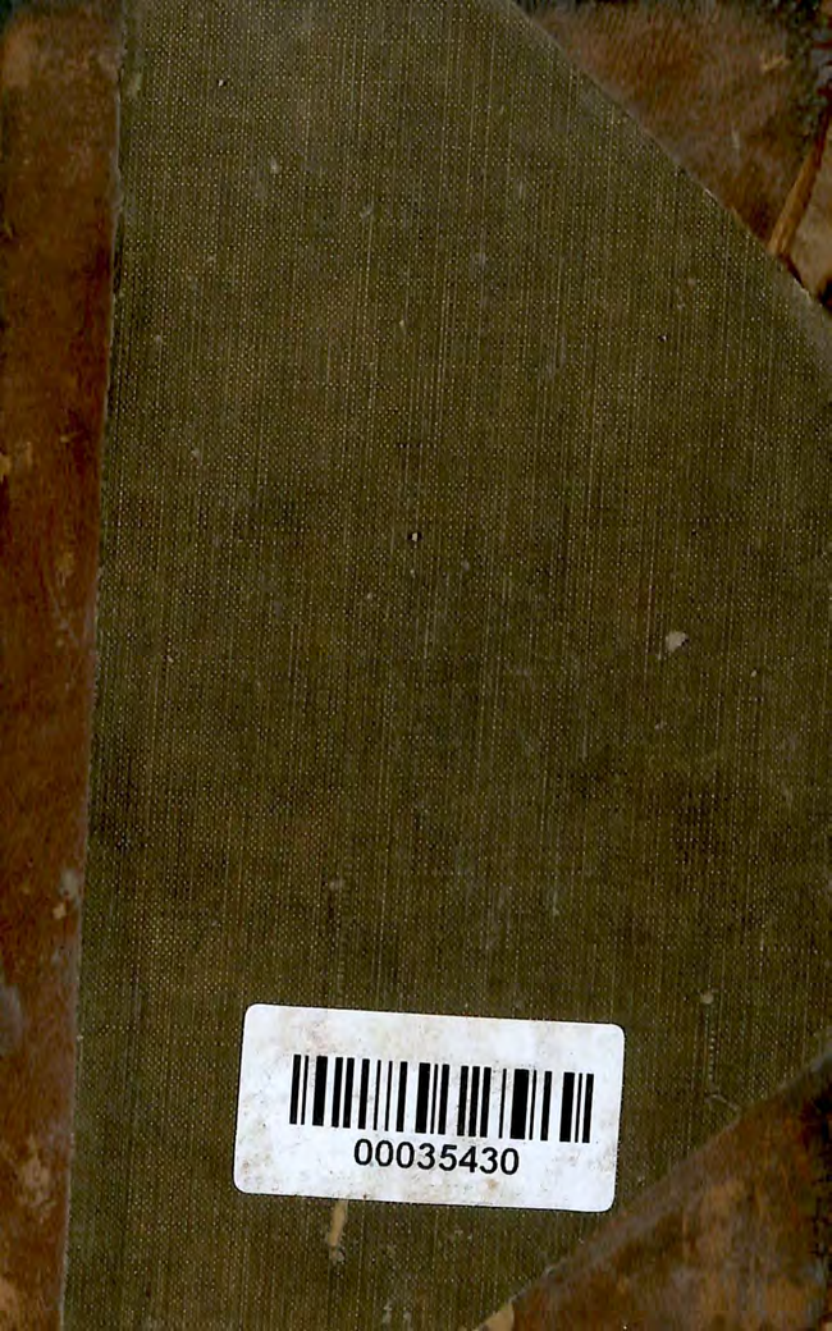
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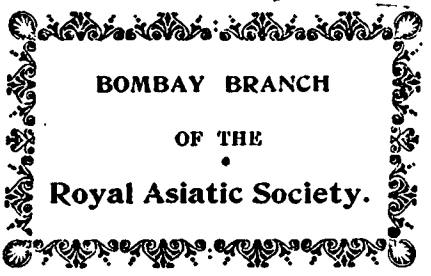

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SHERIDAN AND HIS TIMES.

BY

An Octogenarian,

WHO STOOD BY HIS KNEE IN YOUTH AND SAT AT HIS TABLE IN MANHOOD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

35430

VOL. II.

a.c.

"Whatever Sheridan has done, or chosen to do, has been *par excellence* always the best of its kind. He has written the best comedy, the best opera, the best farce (it is only too good for a farce), and the best address—the monologue on Garrick. And to crown all, delivered the very best oration, the famous Begum Speech, ever conceived, or heard in this country." BYRON.

"Such was Sheridan! He could soften an Attorney! There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus." BYRON.

LONDON:
J. F. HOPE, 16, GT. MARLBOROUGH STREET.
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SHERIDAN AND HIS TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

MASQUERADING—BLACKSTOCK, GREYSTOCK, AND SLIMSTOCK —AN ADVENTURE.

We have described the Salutation Tavern, the modern Boar's Head of the modern Prince Hal, but have left untouched the mysteries of that sanctum of jollity, where midnight campaigns were planned in merriment over the wine-cup and the exhilarating feast of wit. We have not touched upon the feats of our own Haroun-al-Raschid, with his favourite Mesrour; or glanced at the scenes to which his erratic humour led him.

The quiet, unassuming pretensions of the "Salutation" were peculiarly favourable to the seclusion of the parties assembling there, who desired a perfect separation from the great world in which their rank and station had placed them, a separation which afforded them an opportunity of entering into the private enjoyments of a capricious taste, and of mixing in the humble circles

of the lesser world, viewing it in its simplicity, in its vices, and its deformity. Disguises were provided, and committed to the care of the widow Butler, adapted to their nocturnal visitations. Fictitious names and characters were assumed, to baffle recognition in the event of surprise, and a most worthy magistrate held in requisition to answer any event resulting from capture and exposure in their several adventures. In short, everything was most admirably arranged in assuring them protection against the danger which it was highly probable would result from their daring temerity of invading the domiciles of the debased inebriate; the wretched profligate, sinking under the infirmities brought on by his licentious habits; and the baser contumacious ruffian, revelling in his guiltiness, insensible of shame, hardened in vice, cold and callous, dead to conscience, and who, having taught himself to live in open violation of the laws of God and man, gave himself up to a course of iniquity, to terminate only on the scaffold or in some midnight broil in the felon haunts of criminals like himself. It may be considered by many as a morbid taste, the indulgence of so strange a fancy, but, if fairly construed, it might be attributed to a desire of acquiring some knowledge of those grades of society of which he could learn nothing but by report in his own elevated position.

It was on one dark and drizzling night, in the gloom of a November fog, that three strangely accoutred men, habited in the costume of a better class of labourers, essayed from the "Salutation," each armed with a stout club or stick of capacity enough for defence in any ordinary attack. The clock of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, was pealing the hour of eleven as they crossed Bow Street leading to Long Acre, the dim light of the street lamps scarcely gleaming through the drifting mist that surrounded them, while the venerable guardians of the life and property of the peaceable inhabitants of the neighbourhood moaned out "Past eleven o'clock, and a cloudy night." It was past eleven, and the theatres having closed their doors on the close of the performances, the din of "Coach, your honour?" had passed away with the retiring masses, and the street had sunk into a solemn repose, only disturbed by the hoarse cry of the watchman and the distant roar of his rattle, in its fearful summons of pursuit of some detected offender. Messieurs Blackstock, Greystock, and Slimstock were the three adventurers, who upon surmise were said to be no less personages than His Royal Highness George Prince of Wales, Charles Howard Earl of Surrey, and the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, a member of his Majesty's

Most Honourable Privy Council, and Member of Parliament for the loyal and independent borough of Stafford; of whom it may be averred, three blither hearts never joined in a fray, or entered with more zest into the sports, pastimes, or frolics of a free people. The rattle was ringing in their ears, and the confused voices of an assembling multitude, roaring, shouting, hooting, or applauding, was in strong evidence that something more than usual in our common street brawls occasioned the excitement of the many attracted to the spot.

Blackstock, with his dark wig and slouched hat, muffled up in a coarse great-coat, and the lower part of his face concealed in the folds of a dingy-looking coloured handkerchief, spotted and known to the fancy, in the phraseology of the day, as "the bird's-eye fogle," pricked up his ears at the sounds, as they approached or became more distinct, and suddenly exclaiming to his companions "Some fun ahead," rushed forward to the scene of "rude commotion." Greystock and Slimstock, nothing loath, followed their leader, and were soon in the centre of the rabble crowd, surrounding the night "Charlies" and their captured delinquent. That delinquent was a poor, unhappy outcast—one whom the world pities not—whose delinquency is a blighted name bequeathed to her by a betrayer, and whose sub-

sistence solely depends upon her still further degradation. Alas! poor unfortunate, but the eye of sympathy was upon thee, and even the thoughtless libertine bent over thee, in commiseration of thy sorrows and thy sufferings.

"What has this woman done?" asked Blackstock of the watchman who had her in charge. "What crime has she committed, poor wretch?"

"I arn't a going to answer no such questions," replied the surly officer; "she has been kicking up a row, and that's enough. Come, move on—make yourself scarce, or mayhap I may find you a night's lodging not to your liking. So move off—tramp, tramp—I'll warrant me ye're some o' them as is used to the darbies."

Blackstock was about to commit himself; he was not familiar with the "use of the darbies," and did not comprehend the term; but Slimstock slyly enlightened him on the subject, and the three joined in a hearty laugh.

The poor creature so roughly seized and detained was but slightly clad in a faded silk dress, better adapted to the drawing-room than to the streets, over which was thrown a loose shawl of the same texture and the same faded hue. Her hair lay dishevelled on her shoulders; her countenance, full of expression, betrayed the

terror which had paralyzed her whole frame, and left her helpless in the grasp of her feeble captor —for he was old and feeble, but insensible of both in the exercise of what he conceived to be his duty.

Blackstock surveyed the unfortunate with more of compassion than was generally conceived to be in keeping with his general character; he was interested in her appearance, and interfered for her release on inquiring into the charge against her, which upon investigation acquitted her of all but that of being what is technically termed "a disorderly." She was new to the town which she had flown to in her desperation, as the only resource of a life doomed to wretchedness and contamination. Unknown to the frail sisterhood of the quarter which she had selected for her haunts, and not sufficiently subdued to mix with them in their carousals and their shameless inebrieties, she had been ejected and denounced as an unworthy associate, and had that night paid the penalties of disobedience to their rules of sisterhood. They had torn the bonnet from her head, had struck her to the ground, trampled on her dress; and, to wind up the climax, the foremost of her assailants, with the cry of "Watch! watch!" held her, on the ground to which she had felled her, and, on the arrival of the

"watch," charged her with the very offence which she had herself committed, in other words, an assault of a most aggravated character.

"Shame, shame!" was the simultaneous cry of the mob, who are very rarely deficient in the expression of a generous feeling, when appealed to by a woman in distress; but the charge was persisted in, contrary to the evidences, in themselves unmistakeable, and the watchman insisted on conveying the victim to the watch-house.

"I will be answerable for her appearance," said Blackstock, in considerable excitement; "and I," "and I," responded Greystock and Slimstock; while the crowd gathering round the accuser, muttering and murmuring, interrupted her communication with the officer of the night, and the three notables, who had taken a deep interest in the case, released the trembling girl from his official grip, and hurried away with her from the spot.

"A rescue!—a rescue!" was the cry, and again the rattle was sprung, but too late; and the poor and helpless custodian, surrounded by his comrades, who came hobbling along to the discordant summons, was left to the jeering of a rabble always delighting in an opportunity of "posing the Charlies."

But the matter was not to end in this way.

Messieurs Blackstock, Greystock, and Slimstock had been marked, their persons known, and a vigorous pursuit was commenced in vindication of the law and the law's authority; but in the commotion which ensued, sufficient time elapsed for escape. The fugitives had eloped, no one knew whither, and the pursuers had to return to their respective beats, their grievances unredressed.

In the mean time, the parties who had rescued the unfortunate one hurried her along, herself almost unconscious of whither they were leading her, winding through the cross alleys and byways intersecting that thronged region well known in these our own days as the pestilential Seven Dials and St. Giles's. They soon found themselves in somewhat of a better neighbourhood, that of Greek Street, Soho, where the unfortunate woman had obtained lodgings in a private dwelling of no very great repute—where equivocal ladies may obtain a domicile upon exorbitant terms, conditioning an observance of what was due to the respectability of the house. That respectability, however, was jeopardized by the abrupt appearance of the firm of Blackstock, Greystock, and Slimstock, accompanying the fair equivocal at the irregular hour of twelve, the lady's return being generally at one or two in the

morning, and then silently gliding in by aid of her latch-key, alone and unobserved.

Happily for all parties, the respectability of the house was speedily re-established by the deposit of a certain piece of gold of the value of one pound one in the pliant palm of the angered lady of the house, who, if she could supply an abundance of reasons *why* the respectability of her house should be strictly sustained, could also furnish an equal supply of reasons, under circumstances, *why* it might be violated; and, in the instance under narrative, we may safely aver, in the purity of the motives of the triumvirate, no taint could be left behind affecting the character of her house.

There was a something in the appearance of the poor frail creature which could not fail, even with men of the world, of attracting sympathy; there was intelligence gleaming in her countenance, and outraged modesty shrinking in its natural timidity from the licentious gaze, suffused her whole face with blushes. She had been beautiful, and she still was beautiful in its remains; but the flower had lost its bloom, and in a faded cheek was discoverable the serpent that had fed upon it.

Her tale is soon told: brief as were her sufferings, that tale which, as it issued from her pale, cold, quivering lips, with streaming eyes and

occasionally interrupted by convulsive sobs, sank to the hearts of her auditors, stifling every feeling but compassion, exciting no other desire than that of mitigating her sorrows, of rescuing the crushed plant trodden down by the perfidy of man, and hunted into a life of infamy by an unfeeling world. That tale, so full of woe, so feelingly, so artlessly narrated, kept in check the roving thoughts of men unaccustomed to drop into the "melting mood," but in the daring spirit of the voluptuary to look upon frail nature as ordained and doomed to become its prey.

She was the youngest daughter of a solicitor, of considerable eminence in his profession, whose connections lay with a spendthrift nobility, and the sons and sciors of a prodigal aristocracy frequenting his house and adding to the business of his office. Her mother had been deceased for some years; her sisters were married into highly respectable families; her brother—she had only one—was abroad in the East Indies, having received a considerable appointment; and she alone left in the management of her father's household. In this situation, left alone in the guidance of her own conduct, with no one to counsel and advise, or to whom she could reveal the secrets of her heart—for her father was too much engaged in his professional pursuits, or those of his plea-

sures, to attend to the duties of a parent for his child—in the bloom of an early womanhood, she was left to the government of her own feelings; and, having imprudently formed an intimacy with the Hon. B—— C——, to whom she had been introduced by her own more imprudent father, she ultimately became the prey of that practised seducer.

The elegant accomplishments of the man nurtured in the school of fashion, united with the personal graces, and never excelled in the delusive delicacy of address, were well calculated to produce their effect on the young untutored mind which knew little of the world, and less of those artifices formed to deceive, and trained to subdue, innocence in its unconsciousness. Too prone to believe, too ready to accept of, promises artfully interwoven with reasons why those promises should be kept secret and their fulfilment delayed, is the every-day argument of the voluptuary. He had promised her marriage, had bound himself by the most solemn assurances; but that marriage must be secret: he dared not offend a father on whom his sole dependence rested, &c., &c. She fell; she fled her father's house, was conveyed to apartments already prepared for her, and the next day was to consummate their secret marriage; but that marriage never was consum-

mated, but deferred from day to day, on plausible pretexts, until, the heart sickening in the vain hope, she awoke to the discovery of her own positive ruin and the perfidy of the man she had madly loved. His visits became less and less frequent as her importunities became more and more urgent. She was to become a mother—the mother of a child of shame! She felt she was an outcast, the spurned of society; that she was alone in the world with the brand of infamy upon her forehead. She entreated him, on her knees entreated him, and in the agony of her misery fell at his feet imploring, fainting, and senseless.

It was his last visit. On the next day he wrote her that their connexion was at an end; that in a few hours he should be on his road to Paris, where engagements called him; that her beauty, which, as a friend, he urged her to preserve, would procure her many admirers—many, in all probability, more wealthy than himself; that, unhappily, he could not afford to keep up her establishment, and enclosing her fifty pounds to defray her present expenses until she could meet with a suitable friend to provide for her, at the same time assuring her that, under his then pressing circumstances, he had placed himself in a most unenviable position in parting with so large a sum, concluding with a hope that, should

they ever meet again by any chance accident, they might do so as warm friends as ever.

Thus did this cool, deliberate, and accomplished villain repay the affections he had insidiously won, in violation of his oath, cast her on the world in hopelessness and despair, leaving her abandoned to a life of infamy, or, what is better, if it had so pleased Heaven, an early and dishonoured grave, unmourned, unpitied, unregretted, but where the wicked trouble not, and the weary are at rest.

Had the fortunes of this depraved son of a peer cast him among the humbler ranks of those whose meals are purchased by their daily labour, no question can be entertained but he would have figured among the felons of the day; and, fortunate if escaping the expiation of his crimes upon the scaffold, a felon in heart, he would have become a fit associate of a Jack Sheppard, lacking the courage of a Claude Duval or a Turpin; but he was the son of a peer, clothed with the rank of nobility, and, in the loose morals of the day, his offences were venal, and his vices follies.

Stricken to the heart, this poor forlorn one was borne, in strong convulsions, to her bed, and for many weeks remained in a state of insensibility. She awoke to a thorough knowledge of her condition, soothed and consoled by her attendant

physician, the no less amiable than celebrated Dr. Denman, whose services were rendered delicately and gratuitously. Under his advice she wrote to her father and her sisters, feelingly and imploringly; but the execrations of the one, and the scorn and contempt of the others, were the only reply to her penitence and sorrows. Hope was extinguished. She became a mother, and with a mother's pangs came a mother's feelings. She had something to live for. New duties inspired her with fortitude to bear with that heavy calamity which had befallen her, and her thoughts were absorbed in the means of sustaining her own life as a duty to her child. She sought employment as a sempstress, but found it not; or, if found, at so small a recompense, it could scarcely maintain her in bread alone, leaving her wholly deficient in the payment of her weekly rent.

Her money was expended, her trinkets were disappearing to her necessities; even the articles of her clothing were gradually resorted to, to supply those wants indispensable to existence. In this perilous situation she sought and found a humbler home in Greek Street, and in her desperation resolved on an appeal once more to her father; she did so in humble and penitent terms, asking his forgiveness and his mercy—in

vain; her letter, re-directed, was returned with these words: "Starve, viper, and die." Still clinging to hope, that if not for her sake, still for her child's sake, he might relent, and although he might withhold his forgiveness and cast her from him, he might protect her unoffending child, she determined on seeing him, and casting herself at his feet, and imploring that mercy for her babe which she in her transgressions could not hope for.

Alas! frailty in woman carries with it its own bitterness, its own thorns, its own inevitable doom. The titled transgressor may clothe her vices in ermine, and pass unscathed in the gay world's opinion, but the unhappy victim of a villain's snares falls "like a star, to rise no more."

Drawing her shawl around her neck, the last remnant of her reduced wardrobe, closely pressing her infant to her bosom, shielded and sheltered by that shawl from the foggy air that hung in mists around and over the Metropolis on that November evening, firm in purpose, in the resolution of one who feels that his all is dependent on his stake, and ventures that all in despairing madness, she approached her father's door. The mist of the night had nearly penetrated to her skin; it dripped from her hair;

but her child was warm—the damps had not pierced through its ample covering.

She stood upon the steps of that door from which she had flown to become a guilty thing; and as she raised her hand to the knocker of that door, the death-like throe of consciousness palsied the hand so raised, and the knocker fell from it in one deep solemn stroke. The door was opened. Summoning to her aid all her moral courage, she advanced beyond the threshold, her trembling lips scarcely articulating the name of him she sought. Before the servant could reply to her request, the parlour door opened, and her father stood before her like a statue, motionless. She tottered to a seat in one of the hall chairs. She could not speak; her tongue faltered as, with a sudden effort, she clasped her hands together imploringly, while her feverish lips muttered, "Mercy, father, mercy."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the marble man. "Wretch, what do you here? How dare you pollute with your presence the home you abandoned in your infamy!"

"Father, father, hear me!" was the heart-rending cry of the distracted girl. "Hear me, for this infant's sake. Do not curse me; I ask your mercy for his sake—not for my own."

"I will not hear you," was the inexorable reply, "nor shall the air I breathe be longer contaminated by that of a ——" The concluding word was stifled in his anger and his more severe indignation.

"O God! is there no mercy to be shown to one like me—the victim of a wretch in whom I have too much confided?" fell from her lips, as she vainly endeavoured to assuage his wrath. They were the last words she was permitted to breathe forth.

"Turn her out—turn her into the street," cried the inhuman man, turning to the footman in attendance — "to beg, to starve, to rot, to die."

The footman hesitated; compassion was strongly marked upon his countenance, and a tear straying down his cheek. That man wore the livery of his stern master on his back, but the nobler livery of our blessed Saviour in his heart, which commandeth charity to all, and mercy and forgiveness to repentance.

"Obey my orders instantly, or take your dismissal from my service," cried the inexorable father, addressing himself to his servant, but who, if he had weighed his own heart, would have found that he himself stood more in need of mercy and forgiveness than his offending child.

"It must be so, then," replied the man, much moved; "for I cannot in my heart turn my master's daughter from my master's door."

This was her tale, which after-inquiries fully confirmed in all its essential particulars. The father himself thrust her from his house: in vain her shrieks, her tears, and pitiful lamentations; he left her to the drizzling rain of that sad cold night, and closing the door upon her, returned to the comforts of his parlour fire, somewhat excited but not more mercifully moved.

The footman, with that sympathy which is not rare in the humbler walks of life, watching his opportunity when his master had retired, re-opened the street door slowly and silently, in quest of the unhappy one. She was gone; but not to be disappointed in the exercise of his benevolence, he followed her on the way she was most likely to take, and overtook her as she was turning the corner in Piccadilly. She was staggering along as one intoxicated, and many an eye was bent upon her as she passed, some derisively, mistaking the cause of her wretchedness; while some few looked upon her in pity, but more in anger. Hastening up to her side, and handing her over the crossing on which she had just ventured, he slipped into her hand a crown-piece, and with a "God speed you," left her to pursue her home-

ward way. But that crown-piece was a godsend. It was like the manna in the wilderness; it was the subsistence of two enabling the mind on returning to its consciousness to struggle with its woes, and revolve the doubtful means of sustaining life. What means? The world was closed against her—its portals of honest industry were closed. So she thought and so she felt. What, then, was left? To beg, to starve, to see her child sicken at her bosom for want of nourishment; to witness his convulsive agonies while passing the terrible ordeal of a slow and lingering death with the pangs of hunger writhing on his pale cheek? No, no, impossible! She had no one to advise, no one to counsel with, no Christian voice to whisper comfort in her ear or pour a balm upon her woes. She was desolate, isolated in the great world on which she was cast; and the thought came over her, but it passed away; she shuddered at its glance. Again it pressed upon her in that feeble moan of her young child, which could draw no nutriment from her breast, and all her desperate energies were aroused. She loved that child as only mothers can love. So, in the delirium of that hopelessness which had driven away her purer thoughts, she determined on her own immolation, her own voluntary self-sacrifice in support

of that little life, to her so precious, the unconscious companion of her sorrows, the only solace left her in her great trouble. It was the desperate resolution of the troubled maniac; but when she came to the fatal remedy, and the libertine of the streets approached her, terror, disgust, horror, and dismay disarmed her of her purpose: a terrified timidity was not in keeping with the blandishments of the cyprian, and she could not fall in the path she had madly chosen even though the cup of misery, drained to the dregs, was still before her with all its pending horrors.

But her rescue was at hand: it was reserved to her to win the gay voluptuary to her holy cause, and find protectors in those men whose names stood foremost in the lists of the licentious.

It was in the morning that her landlady demanded the payment of her rent, which was then overdue, in coarser tones than usual, accompanied by remarks upon her beauty and its profitable use, and insisting upon payment or else the streets—the streets must shelter her in her penury and pride, or probably the workhouse might receive her, if she could prove her parish. "Why, you fool," she continued, "you've a fortin in your face, if you did but know how to use it. Why I knows a gentleman who will stand your lodging, and perhaps summut more,

for the matter of that, if folks would come down with their infernal pride; but that makes no odds to me; I wants my money, and that's all about it, and if I hasn't it paid into my hands to-morrow morning, I seizes your duds, though, God knows, they're worth but little, and you may walk."

Blackstock listened to the narrative we have so fully related, and which we had from her own lips on a subsequent occasion, when a better fortune smiled upon her, and her torn reputation was restored to healthiness by the clear evidences of a mind firm in its principles, commanding in its developed powers, and chastened by its trials.

Blackstock, who had taken a deep interest in the narrator, had upon several occasions interrupted her with questions, which, being readily answered, removed from his mind some doubts still lingering there, and partially to her discredit.

Rising from his seat, with that air of dignity and courtly ease which ill became him in the character he had assumed, and shamed the mask by which the real purposes of that night had been concealed, dropped his purse into her lap. He was a prince—ay, "every inch a prince"—in the rich endowments of a well-cultivated mind, the sensitive nature of a warm

and generous heart. He had many virtues, but he had many frailties, vices, if that appellation is better adapted to the case. Born in a court, reared in a court, nurtured in a court atmosphere, in the gorgeous temple of luxury; devoted to the gratification of every passion, unrestrained by moral influences, surrounded by a vain and frivolous nobility; courted, followed, and admired by the exalted in rank, obsequious, and acknowledging themselves honoured in his smiles, by these means claiming an enviable distinction; wooed by the high-born dames of quality, resplendent in beauty, decked with all the charms and blandishments so captivating to youth in its freshness—temptation sitting on the pouting lip, consent on the flushed cheek, the yielding passion in the soft, blue eye,—he was what the world had made him, and the world was amenable for those vices which it had set down to his account alone.

His virtues were his own, and they were of the noblest class—the emanations of a truly benevolent heart, which viewed the common frailties of our poor human nature rather with pity than with scorn, and could yield his sympathies for woman in her weakness.

He dropped his purse into her lap with a delicacy which cast aside even the faintest

doubts of the purity of his thoughts. She was young, she was beautiful, and doubly interesting in her affliction and in her tears; but our incognito saw her only in her sorrow, and was animated by no other feeling than the relief he might afford.

"That servant—that footman of your father's of whom you spoke—do you know, or do you remember, his name?" he inquired.

"I do," was the reply; "he has lived with my father for several years. A faithful servant. I can never forget him. His name is Roberts."

The name was entered on the tablets of the inquirer.

We shall not dwell upon the passionate expressions of gratitude flowing from the lips and from the eyes of the young mother, as she stood over the pillow of her child, springing to her arms, awakening from his slumbers; or the joy of that poor heart that nestled him to her bosom, in the assured means which the purse afforded her of providing for his little wants without the abhorrent sacrifice which the rigid sternness of necessity had meditated. There was joy in the heart; it spoke in the most intelligible language as she kissed the hand of her benefactor, and moistened it with her tears.

"We may not meet again," he said, as he withdrew his hand; "but your welfare shall be

looked to and secured—comfort yourself with that assurance. Adieu!"

They rose to depart; the clock had struck the hour, and the hoarse bawling of the watchman pronounced it "Two, and a cloudy morning." Slimstock had taken an eager interest in all that had passed. He was not a libertine: acute in his feelings, tender in his expressions of sympathy, and withal chaste in his ideas, he had listened with the deepest attention to the wrongs and sufferings of one so young, so innocent, and so confiding. He had in his pocket a guinea, a solitary coin, a disconsolate coin, an isolated coin, which had been stowed away heaven knows how or when, but there it was, solitary and alone, like a friendless colt in an open pasture. It was an honest coin, and honestly bestowed; there was a pressure of the hand as he parted with it; a tear in that large and lustrous eye, which dimmed its brightness, still shone forth in the excited tenderness of a generous sympathy: it was peculiar to that extraordinary man that whatever touched his feelings exhibited its instantaneous effects in a moistened eye. I have seen him at the representation of his own adaptation of Kotzebue's "Stranger" to the stage, weep as a child would weep at the inimitable performance of Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble in the characters of

Mrs. Haller and the *Stranger*, and have actually, in the scene of the children, led him from his box almost convulsed at the mimic scene.

Nature sublimed by art, but so sublimed that nature herself could alone be seen, was to him, and we believe to the world generally, the very perfection of the mimic art; but he was no admirer of tragedy, and I have seen him unmoved at the moanings of *Monimia*, actually laugh at the sorrows of *Calista*, and the maniacism of *Alicia*. Tragedy buckramed and on stilts—the bowl and the dagger—had no charms for him. All his impulses were of nature, unrestrained; and nature alone, in her homely garb, her mourning weeds, her sufferings, her sorrows, and her trials, could always find a response in that impulsive heart, which never lost its freshness during life, and which adversity in its sternest mood could not corrode.

Now, whether George Prince of Wales, if he had found himself in the same situation in which Blackstock stood, would have done as he (Blackstock) did, remains a question to be solved at leisure; or, if Blackstock, in the likeness of George Prince of Wales, in the trappings of royalty, revelling in the gorgeous magnificence of the heir apparent of the throne, destined at some distant period to rule the destinies of his

country, surrounded by flattery, tempted by the lordly and lady sensualist to the indulgence of his passions, to the corruption of his moral nature, and the perversion of that noble mind which but for its satellites might have shone forth with more than ordinary lustre,—it might equally be questioned whether Blackstock, placed in that position, would have in like manner done that which he (the Prince) had done. Their characters, to ordinary appearance, were as distinct from each other as might be well conceived; yet the Prince, in his palace of Carlton, surrounded by courtiers, ermined in state, and banqueting in voluptuousness, and Blackstock, in his coarse woollen coat, with its heavy brass buttons and its Irish cape, might be identified in their individuality as one and the same person, governed by the same feelings, actuated by the same impulses, but adapting them to the circumstances and the situation in which the party might be cast.

Sheridan was the friend, favourite, and acknowledged adviser of George Prince of Wales; Slimstock the never-failing companion of Blackstock in his strange adventures.

This one thing is for certain, so far as the question of identity is concerned; the Prince of Wales fulfilled to the very letter the promise made by Blackstock, who from that single visit

was never again seen in Greek Street, Soho, or at any other residence to which the lady had resorted. Blackstock and Slimstock were never again heard of in that quarter; but Sheridan, in obedience to his instructions, and prompted by his own active benevolence, procured for the lady a change of residence in the house of the celebrated founder of the great blacking firm of Day and Martin, at that time hairdresser to the theatre, where, under the auspices of the kind manager, she studied for the stage with John P. Kemble and the occasional tuition of that greatest of tragedians Mrs. Sarah Siddons. Under an assumed name, a *nomme de théâtre*, she made her *début* in the character of *Rosalind*, in "As You Like It," in which part, if she did not create what is called a sensation, she was received with an applause which secured her a lucrative position on the pay-list of the theatre—a state of independence to which she aspired, and to secure which she incessantly laboured.

Lovely in person, modest in her deportment, graceful in her carriage, with a sweet voice, soft, clear, and melodious, still she had commenced her studies too late to become sufficiently accomplished to take leading parts in the profession she had assumed; but what she did she did well, and her ambition never prompted her to complain of

the small parts committed to her rendition. She was a good actress, but deficient in that force which could give effect to the conflict of the passions; but the more estimable qualities of the good woman were eminently hers. Surrounded by admirers attracted by her beauty, tempted by offers to which her situation exposed her, she rose above scandal, even in her whispering malignity, and retaining her self-respect as her more intriguing admirers drew off, she obtained the respect of the dissolute and disappointed.

At the age of twenty-four, then in the flower of her beauty, she accepted the offer of an amiable man of abundant means, and for whom she had formed a strong attachment. It was in her pride and in her virtue that she had confided to his bosom the secret of her little history. It was kept there, nurtured there, like a hidden jewel, never to be exposed. He loved her not the less for the dark shadow which had been cast upon her youth, but the more for the confidence she had reposed in his integrity and honour, and the candour with which she had made admission of her guilty thoughts, her wild despair, and want of moral fortitude. Roberts, the footman, was received into the establishment of Carlton as a reward for his benevolent feelings for his master's daughter, and ultimately became the

confidential servant of the Prince, the Regent, and the King, whom he served faithfully, and survived.

In omitting to name the exemplary lady now no more, the subject of the little narrative and object of the royal benevolence, not the less indebted, at the same time, to the active philanthropy of Sheridan, we have been governed solely by our desire of sparing the feelings of a large and highly distinguished family she has left behind her, inheritors of her virtues but not of her troubles; and although there is not a member of that family but might be proud of such a parent, still to revive that dark page in her little history would be but to lend to calumny a new fact for distortion, to detraction and malevolent invention fresh food for its poisonous circulation.

The boy—her first-born, the offspring of her betrayer—fell at Trafalgar in the service of his country, a lieutenant in the navy, deeply lamented by his captain, honoured and respected by the ship's crew in which he served.

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER ADVENTURE—VISIT TO THE "BROWN BEAR"—ITS ACCUSTOMED GUESTS—DANGEROUS POSITION—THE RESCUE AND THE CAPTURE—THE NIGHT CONSTABLE—THE MAGISTRATE.

But the night, or rather the morning, was not going to close in that way. They were out on the ramble in search of some merry adventure in the haunts of the humble or the abodes of the vicious. It was two o'clock. The ancients were snoring on their beats in their several boxes. It was past two o'clock; the quarter had been struck; that sullen hour when the retreating burglar skulks in the byways, alarmed lest his own footfall should betray him in his uneasy flight. The streets were deserted; the mob-clamour of the drunken and the disorderly had ceased; the blasphemous oaths and imprecations of a multitude had progressively died away as the hours advanced, and the drizzling moisture of the heavens warned them away. The night prowler, the houseless, had sought their shelter in the night-houses, as they are called, whose doors are opened at midnight, and closed at the

first break of the coming day; those miserable receptacles of poverty and crime where men "do congregate," and women too, and boys and girls, filthy and ragged, steaming with intemperance, insensible of their condition, and rioting in the contagious atmosphere of disease and death.

It was to the "Brown Bear," then, and, probably still standing in Broad Street, St. Giles's, famous in its day as the sanctuary of the lower ruffian, the harlot, and the destitute wretch, outcast of all but the community of this demon den; it was to the "Brown Bear" that our incognitos directed their steps in quest of adventure, and to behold vice in its terrible deformity. It was a bold and hazardous enterprise, attended by no common danger, and scarcely with a defence in the event of an assault from desperate men united and armed with desperate energies. Their hearts faltered as they ventured across the threshold, but it was passed—retreat was impossible. They had attracted attention, and to turn away was but to deepen that interest which their momentary appearance had excited, and provoke the sharpened appetite of the robber for the plunder which their presence indicated to be within their grasp.

"Strangers in the crib!" was murmured throughout the spacious room, its benches lined

with the veriest dregs of society, and on its sanded floor lay stretched girls, boys, and stalwart men, some nearly in a state of nudity, but all in a state of drowsy insensibility arising from the liquor which they had swallowed; the steam and odour of their mingled breaths was intolerable, the very air was putrid with drunkenness and disease.

"Yokels!" muttered several voices crowding around the spacious bar, still panting in their inordinate thirst for the intoxicating draught. "Swells!" growled out a few, while the veterans of the gang, with a more knowing wink to each other, whispered "Traps!"

Blackstock, with that cool display of courage which distinguished every member of his family, advanced among the group with an unflinching firmness and that resolute eye betokening a consciousness of his own powers in defence, and a promptitude and decision in resistance of aggression.

"An ugly customer," remarked one who had eyed him from head to foot, measured his proportions, and carried to account the awkward bludgeon which he carried in his hand.

Greystock and Slimstock followed at his heel, the former a little pursy, but stout and resolute;

the latter by no means liking his position, but lacking nothing in that coolness and courage which the occasion might require. They had each of them acquired a perfect knowledge of the art of self-defence as taught by Slack and Broughton, the two great pugilists of the day; and were not deficient in single-stick and other athletic exercises, the fashion of the times. They were well-built men, and to the practised eye of the ruffian who plumed himself on his strength, "ugly customers;" besides, there were "three on 'em." It would be difficult to find their match among the whole group who were not "too lushy to stand up," said a sturdy, thickset man at the bar, "and that's all about it."

We may question the good taste of the three intruders into this noxious pandemonium, but we cannot but admire that self-possession with which they encountered the dangers surrounding them; a controlling self-command which had deterred the sturdiest ruffian of the group from adventuring the display of his skill in bullying and bearing down upon the victims he had selected for his prey. It was evident, according to their slang phraseology, that these men were "wide awake," but who they were and what they were was a mystery: they might be *prigs* or *cracksmen*, but it seemed more

likely they were *beaksmen*, that is to say, *traps*. If they were the latter, "they should catch what they deserved," for the whole force would be upon them.

Advancing to the counter where the liquors were being served out to impatient customers, Blackstock called for brandy.

"Some of the right sort, sir?" inquired the tapster, with a knowing leer.

"The best," replied Slimstock, ranging himself by the side of Blackstock. "The very best—the private particular—the black bottle."

"Directly, my worthy," returned the man at the bar. "A shilling a-glass—three shillings; the brads, if you please."

"What do you mean?"

"The chink, sir—the chink; we never serves out the liquor without the chink in hand."

"Make it four," said a rough, ungainly fellow, sidling up by the side of Greystock, and lounging on the railings of the bar. "Make it four—stop! here's my pal—we al'ays drinks together—can't take my glass without sharing with my pal."

"Is it to be so?" asked the barman.

Blackstock nodded an assent, handing over a guinea, and waiting for the change.

"A greeny as hasn't cast off his mother's feathers," cried the pal, winking to his comrade,

and fixing his gloating eye upon the coin under process of investigation.

"He has ruined all by his folly!" whispered Greystock to Slimstock.

"Is that a nest-egg, or are there more in the shell a-hatching?" slily inquired a burly man of gigantic stature, in the worn-out and apparently cast-off coat of a brewer's drayman. He had a broad, low, overhanging forehead; his head was clothed with a close short-cut shock of red hair; his eyes were grey, sharp, and sinister. There was nothing in the personal appearance of this man that could be mistaken; his looks would have convicted him at the bar of justice, and in the place where he was met, suspicion could not suggest a doubt.

"What say you, Jack?" whispers another. "Shall we crack the shell and hatch the birds?"

"Wait a bit," was the reply; "a little more lush, and the game will be riper."

"Give me my change," said Blackstock to the barman.

"Oh, damn the change!—what signifies the change?" cried he with the red hair. "The gemman wishes for us to drink his health."

Was compliance good policy? That is the question; but Blackstock did comply, and so the question rested.

Glasses went round to the extent of the change, and now the clamour began increasing in violence as the bar became crowded by the malcontents who had not partaken of the spoil. Blackstock stood firm as the crowd pressed upon him, with his back to the bar, so as to *reconnoitre* the advance and keep them in front. It was a moment of some anxiety; the crowd keep pressing forward in compact body, Redhead in front.

"Stand back!" cried Blackstock, at the top of his voice, with commanding firmness, "or you will get hurt."

But Redhead, nothing daunted, and being so powerfully backed, had him at arm's length, and was about to spring upon him, when, quick as thought, the bludgeon came down upon his head with stunning force, and he fell to the ground like an ox, stunned by the fall. All was now tumult and excitement; Slimstock kept his stick in constant motion above his head, ready to fall upon that of his first assailant. Blackstock was not less upon the alert in self-defence; while Greystock, struggling his way through the crowd unobserved in the *mêlée* which ensued, gained the street in order to procure a sufficient force of the night patrol to quell the riot and rescue his friends. The watchhouse-keeper was aroused from his comfortable snoose, and the constable of

the night prepared himself to take a charge. All was in motion.

The "Brown Bear"—that terrible "Brown Bear" so dreaded by the veteran guardians of the public peace, was the battle-ground to which the veteran battalions of the parochial watch were invited, and they hobbled on to the charge, armed with stout staves, and helmeted with the leathern cap more impenetrable than their heads; rattles were sprung in every direction, windows were thrown open as the hubbub passed along, and night-capped heads were peering out as the lanterns' glimmering lights were dancing in the mist of that lowering morning.

In the mean time, the combat had assumed a much more alarming phase, and the situation of the two friends become more perilous; several broken heads testified to the vigour of their defence, and, happily for them, the surging to and fro of the drunken wretches mixing in the broil operated as a check upon the more desperate and adventurous, and so interposing between the parties, restrained that ferocious assault which would ultimately have terminated in the severest punishment, and, in all probability, fatally.

Blackstock and Slimstock, with an admirable presence of mind and forethought, in order to prevent a rear attack, fought their way back

to back, and had nearly reached the doorway, when relief came in; not two or three hobblers, but the whole force, a whole regiment of invalids, armed and accoutred for attack and capture. This was as it should be: the "Brown Bear" was renowned as a fortress of great strength, defended by a garrison of sturdy disciplinarians, thoroughly trained in their vocation, who, with the gibbet before their eyes in perspective, and holding their liberties and their lives upon the precarious tenure of resistance to the laws which they had violated, were only to be reduced by superior numbers. In they rushed, in glorious disorder, lanterns, staves, and all in one huge mass, well wedged in together, and overwhelming all before them, not by their prowess, but by their weight and pressure, impelled forward by those from behind, who, having no desire to be foremost in the fight, testified the greatest eagerness in pressing forward their comrades to the fray.

So truly astonishing was the effect produced by this incapable force on the minds of the assembled ruffians, that dismay and terror instantly succeeded the bold and insolent daring of the profligate housebreaker, the street felon, and the muscular bully, spotted like a leper with his vices and his crimes. Redhead and his pal were first among the missing, and, as it were by magic, the whole crew, with

the exception of a few maimed beggars and drunken harlots, too insensible to be capable of an effort at escape, were gone!—vanished, as it were, from sight, at the sound of the rattle and the foggy light of the lantern; thereby testifying to the fact that there is no cowardice so great as that of the terror-stricken rogue who abandons himself to the commission of crimes, and lives under the harrowing fear of detection.

The room was cleared, but by what means it was impossible to divine, since no attempt at forcing a way through the advancing watchmen was made, and no other mode of egress was perceptible. Still the place was cleared of the insurgents, and left alone to our three incognitos and the bold guardians of the public peace who had, in so short a space of time, achieved so glorious and bloodless a victory. Yes, a glorious triumph, which the jabbering of many voices loudly proclaimed; still there was no capture, and that was a sad look-out in the face of their strong muster.

Blackstock, greatly fatigued, stood at the corner of the bar, leaning his head upon his arm, having received several uncourteous blows in the encounter, and otherwise greatly fatigued, when one of the lantern squad, turning his eye upon him, exclaimed, exultingly,—

"That's one on 'em, or my name is not Patrick O'Brian—I'll swear to him, any how."

"An' these two are t'others," bawled out another of the fraternity.

"Scoundrels!" said Blackstock, rousing himself to resistance.

"Be aisy, my darlint," cried the afore-named Patrick O'Brian, "an' surrenthur yourself like a gen'leman, or belikes you'll get bothered in the head the same as you bothered poor Terence M'Carthy in the Aere, in the exercise of his duty."

Saying this, and at the same time raising his hand to the collar of his intended prisoner, Slimstock interposed a blow which levelled the unfortunate Patrick O'Brian to the unenviable position of his friend Mr. Terence M'Carthy. This blow was looked upon as indicating a determined resistance of lawful authority, and of open rebellion, to be punished there and elsewhere, as it may please the bench of magistrates in open session.

The tumult was renewed; broken heads followed; and broken lanterns, their dim lights extinguished, lay scattered on the ground—their glories gone—lamps, glasses, rattles, staves, and bludgeons, were scattered about in fragments in every direction; but there was no cry of quarter. Blackstock, supported by his two backers, dealt about him heavy blows, which were as sharply

returned and adroitly caught on the guard, so that there was little mischief done in that way; but numbers overpowered energy, and the three champions were finally brought to a forced surrender by sheer exhaustion.

"Arrah fait', my honey!" said O'Brian, addressing himself to Blackstock, as he was unceremoniously conducting him to the watch-house, "I'm thinking you'll have to pay for the head o' mine which you ha' cracked, an' be blamed to you. Ay, shure, and won't Terence be down upon you! I'm blowed, but he will—an' the justice too, for he's bound to purtect us as have the King's authority for locking up the likes o' you; and if he doan't, why, by the powers what's the use of the King's authority? Not a ha'porth—not a ha'porth!"

"What do you ask for your head?" asked Slimstock, good-humouredly.

"My head—is it my head?" replied Brian. "Fait' an' you'll very shortly know the price of a piece on it, which will be more than ye'll be liking to pay for."

"I'm for a slice at valuation," returned Slimstock.

"An' what wud you do wid it?" said the Irish Charley, inquiringly.

"My cat has got kittens; I would give it her for a breakfast relish."

"Out upon you for a cannibal, you varmint! Is it yourself wud make cat's-meat of un ould Irishman's head in the sarvice of the King—God bless him! Oh, murther, murther!—an' if the rope don't finish your business, there's neither law nor justice to be had in the King's dominions."

By this time the prisoners, attended by their guardians, arrived at St. Giles's far-famed watch-house, and were presented in due form to the presiding dignitary of the night—the parochial constable.

He was a burly, heavy, pompous little man, with a low, expansive, tabular-formed head, covered with crisp black hair, close cropped; his forehead was square, and projecting over a dull grey eye, void of expression, shielded by a coarse shaggy brow, overhanging it in sombre dignity, as the yew-tree hangs over the urn of the sepulchre; his mouth was of sufficient capacity to be likened to the smoky flue of a furnace, in the constant emission of a noxious cloud of vapour bursting from his jaws, vomiting forth the inhalations drawn from a long pipe which he held between his teeth, and puffed and puffed at pleasure, himself surrounded by the thick atmosphere which he had created.

Seated in his chair of state, with a jug of hot

punch before him, which he occasionally lifted to his lips with the becoming dignity of a man in office, he eyed his prisoners as they were brought before him, and, commanding silence, threw himself back in the cushioned seat, thus preparing himself for the investigation, which, after three brisk hems and an equal number of grave pauses, he commenced as follows:—

"What have you here?"

"Assault and battery, your honour; rioting in the streets, rescuing a prisoner who got away, broken heads, and broken lanterns, your honour's honour; desperate resistance of lawful authority, an', may it please your honour, three more desperate ruffians were never let loose 'pon 'spectable society."

"Serious charges—very serious charges (a puff at the interval of each word delivered)—monstrous serious charges. Do any of you remember to have seen either of the prisoners afore?"

"Can't say for sartin, your honour," replied one with his head bound up with a coarse towel, admirably adapted to the occasion. "Can't say for positive sartin, but I thinks I knows that 'un," pointing to Slimstock; "I think I knows him—ay, and now I looks agin, am sartin sure on't: that's he as I saw last Sunday night prowling about the jeweller's shop in Holborn as was broke

open the same night and robbed. I'm sartin shure it's him."

"That's false!" cried Blackstock, who began to feel uneasy at the turn things were taking. "I say that's false, as I can prove, for that evening he spent with me."

"I didn't say he didn't, did I," was the cool reply; "you are all three of the same gang."

Slimstock laughed immoderately, Blackstock and Greystock joining. The constable of the night looked unusually grave.

"Your name, sir?" addressing himself to Blackstock.

"Blackstock," was the reply.

"Where do you live?"

"At home."

"No purwarication, sir; remember who you are afore."

"I do, sir," returned Blackstock, with mock humility, Greystock and Slimstock bowing to the ground with affected submission.

"Then answer my question, sir. Where do you live?"

"Anywhere, everywhere, wherever I can."

"Write down (to the clerk) no settled place of residence. What is your trade, calling, or profession?"

"Cannot exactly say, am not very particular; takes anything as comes to hand."

At this interrogatory, with the answer, the three roared with laughter, to the great discomfiture of the distinguished official, who, as he said, was taken quite aback at the daring effrontery of the suspected criminals.

"And now, sir, pray what may your name be?"

"Greystock, at your service."

"Greystock, hem; any relation to the last man I just examined?"

"Not at present," hastily interrupted Slimstock; "but if he lives long enough, in all probability, he *may* become a Greystock."

"Not very likely," was the sagacious reply of the dignified official; "before that time arrives the rope will have done its duty."

"I see there is no deceiving your worship," returned Slimstock, with a humble and penitent voice, tendering a bow at the same time to the dignity in the chair, which was condescendingly received as a becoming tribute to his penetration.

The examination was continued.

"Where do you reside, sir?" addressed to Greystock, as before.

"Sometimes in one place, sometimes another; sometimes in St. James's, Westminster, sometimes

in Surrey or Sussex, sometimes in Herefordshire, then in Nottinghamshire, or Yorkshire, or Cumberland—just as the whim takes me."

"Heaven defend me! this fellow extends his depredations over the whole country. Your profession?"

"You may guess my profession by my last answer; you pretty well hit the mark when you charged me with committing my depredations over the whole country. However, as I am not satisfied with the word depredations, permit me to substitute contributions, and I plead guilty to the charge of levying contributions in each of the places named."

"Terrible effrontery! And I dare say you have an *alias* or two at command to suit your convenience."

"Why, bless your honour!" again interrupted Slimstock, "they have each of them more *aliases* than any thief that was ever brought before you. This man Blackstock has an *alias* by which he is known in Scotland, another by which he is known in Ireland, another by which he is known in Wales, another by which he is recognized in Cornwall; and pretty pickings, I can tell you, he gathers out of the miners in that place."

"Bring out the darbies and the handcuffs!" cried the astonished constable; "these fellows

must be taken care of. My life! I never heard of such daring offenders. And you, sir," addressing Slimstock, "and pray what may be your name?"

"Slimstock, and please your worship's reverence, Slimstock, at your worship's service."

"Slimstock!" looking over his notes, and evidently much puzzled. "Blackstock, Greystock, Slimstock—why, you are all stocks, and," shaking his head, "I fear me a very bad stock." It was the only bit of wit on which the worthy had ventured, which produced roars of laughter, in which the culprits joined, and which arrived at fever heat, including his reverence himself, on Patrick O'Brian roaring out with stentorian voice, "Fait', an' ye may say that same thing, and ye may make no mistake either." On order being somewhat restored, which had disturbed the gravity of the incumbent of the state chair, his reverence or his worship, or by whatever name the worthy parish functionary may be distinguished, resumed his interrogation of Slimstock.

"Well, sir, and where is your place of residence?"

"Wherever I find it most convenient."

"Where, fellow, and how do you live?"

"By eating and drinking; and by your honour's leave, I'll drink your honour's very good

health." Saying which, he took up the jug of punch, and after swallowing the greater part of its contents was about to restore it to the table, when it was torn from his grasp by the indignant watch standing nearest at hand.

The anger of his worship was aroused at the indignity offered to his person in the matter of the punch, but was almost as immediately assuaged, mollified, and subdued by the adroitness of his tormentor,—Slimstock, who avowed his sorrow and mistake in imagining that his worship had asked him to drink, and offering to stand another jug, his worship complacently smiling on the pliant, very gentlemanly, and singularly polite Slimstock, glancing an angry frown on the two contumacious delinquents, who were actually standing laughing at his elbow,—could not but express his deep regret that so respectable a young man as he (Mr. Slimstock) appeared to be, should be found in the company of such men as he should feel bound to safely lodge in the lock-up for that night, unless good and sufficient bail should be given for their appearance in the morning; and indeed he began to doubt whether, under the very suspicious circumstances which had turned up upon investigation, he could take bail at all. Bad case, alarming case; house-robbing, shop-lifting, street-robbery, burglary,

forgery, arson—who knows? perhaps murder. Murder!—oh, horrible thought! Their very looks betray their guilt; and most likely, of all the crimes enumerated, lumped all together. Hardened wretches! the more he felt alarmed they laughed the more and louder.

Slimstock determined on turning to account the favourable impressions he had made on the learned parish functionary; approaching him, therefore, with all due respect, whispering in his ear, "That if he would allow him just a few words in private, he would satisfy him on every point in respect to himself, and show up the two villains now standing before him in their true character."

"Villains! what does he mean?" inquired Greystock, whisperingly to his friend.

"Mean, why, he means with that smooth tongue of his to talk us out of our disagreeable dilemma," replied Blackstock.

"I will reveal them to you," continued Slimstock, "in their proper character, and, the world knowing nothing of what passes between you and me, will give you great credit for your surpassing penetration; while the Crown, deeply indebted to you for frustrating the designs of two of the — I will not say what, will shower down upon you its highest honours; but remember I am to be admitted as King's evidence, and absolved of

my share of the crimes they have committed."

The black hair of the parish constable became more and more grizzled as he listened to Slimstock, who added, "It will be necessary that my deposition should be taken before a justice of the peace. I shall therefore scrawl out a few lines to Justice Graham, who will attend immediately after receiving my note. Despatch it immediately."

"It shall be done, sir," replied the dignitary pompously, who already felt the promised honours showering down upon him.

Slimstock wrote as follows:—

"To Justice Graham.

"Sir,—Messrs. Blackstock, Greystock, and Slimstock feel themselves in a state of durance beyond endurance, without a social companion: you are therefore requested to be in personal attendance at the Watch-house, St. Giles's, as soon after you receive this as you can draw on your boots, with a bottle of choice port in each pocket and one under each arm. By command, "SLIMSTOCK."

The letter was despatched; in due time the worthy justice made his appearance, and was received with more than ordinary courtesy by the high and mighty constable of the night.

Graham's first inquiry was for the charge-book.

"Why, how is this?" he inquired; "I see no charge entered as against these gentlemen: why have you detained them? I fear you will have to pay heavily for their false imprisonment."

The parish incumbent of the great chair of magisterial authority smiled incredulously at his Worship of Bow Street. "I shall take upon myself the entire 'sponsibility of my own acts, Mr. Graham; I thinks I knows my duty as well as some folks knows theirn. I han't sat in this chair for nothing; no, Mr. Graham, I must ha' larnt summut while sarving the office of Constable of the night."

"That's all very well; but I want to know the charge brought against these most respectable gentlemen, and by which they are detained."

"Why, as to the charge, that's a small matter, comparatively speaking like—merely a matter of breaking heads and lanterns; but when you talks about 'spectability, I guess you're not among the knowing ones."

"What! do you doubt their character?"

"Not at all, Mr. Graham; we knows their character and shall startle even the Old Bailey by and by. Why, these fellows are up to everything, and gallows-birds they are, with as many aliases as there are letters in the alphabet."

"Pooh, pooh! you are deceived!"

"Maybe I am, and maybe I arn't; but no more talking; your business here, Mr. Graham, is to take the deposition of one on em' as has turned King's evidence agen 'em, and is about to make a clean breast of it—in confessing high-treason, and petty treason, murder and larceny, forgery and burglary."

"Hold! hold! You amaze me! Where is your witness?"

"Stand forward, Mr. Slimstock, and answer such questions as may be put to you without reserwation, assured of our protection in all such matters as may criminate yourself, purwided always."

This invitation was delivered with imperturbable gravity, not disturbed by the suppressed laughter of the delinquents, and the more hearty of the astonished magistrate.

"Slimstock!" chuckled Graham. "Slimstock, incorrigible rogue! Slimstock turned King's evidence," with loud laughter. "Well, let us hear what he has to say, and with how many rogueries he has been connected."

Slimstock stood by the side of the constable, perfectly unmoved by the merriment created by the announcement of his name as a witness, and sustaining by his assumed gravity the somewhat drooping confidence of that distinguished official,

who, by the continued shouts of laughter with which he was assailed, began to suspect something, but what that something was, was far beyond his comprehension. There was some mystery hanging about the matter, that he could clearly perceive, but it was not open even to his most acute research; in fact, it was too much clouded for his divination.

Graham, as soon as he could command his countenance, and reassume that gravity which had been strangely disturbed, required to hear what the faltering Slimstock had to confess, and what he had to charge against his confederates.

Slimstock kept his eye fixed upon the ground in apparent abstraction.

"Traitor!" exclaimed Greystock, in affected indignation, "betrayer of your friends, beware!"

Slimstock replied with a searching look, which had its due effect upon the dignified potential.

"My conscience, sir, and not my will—my troubled conscience, labouring under the weight of many crimes, innocently committed, and into which I have been dragged by keeping bad company, surrounded by evil men and wicked counsellors—it is my conscience, sir, that speaks, and not myself; for I verily believe that if that conscience had been allowed to slumber, I should have continued in the wicked course I have hitherto

pursued." Affecting tears, he dropped his head upon his hand, and would have raised his handkerchief to his eyes, but on searching his pocket, it was gone. "Bad company—bad company," he exclaimed, turning round to Blackstock, and to Greystock, too; "which of you have stolen my pocket handkerchief?" This was too much; the fit was upon him; Graham gave way, and the worthy in the big chair called aloud "to order" in the dignified voice and manner of the Speaker of the Commons House of Parliament, adding, when order was obtained, "he could not see what there was to laugh at in a charge of petty larceny, unless, indeed, it was that dog eat dog—one thief could have been found to have robbed another."

Blackstock's suspicions were excited with reference to his own, and, on a search, it was found that not a handkerchief, or a glove, or a purse, remained to them among the three—it was quite clear that the "Brown Bear" had swallowed them all.

This announcement was made with great glee and certain significations as did not fail to puzzle the wits of the parochial functionary. He had never had such a case before him; it would puzzle a conjuror, so it would, to make anything out of it. He had never had to deal with such men as

these Blackstocks, and Greystocks, and Slimstocks, with as many aliases as would fill a peck measure, and, no doubt, burthened with as great a budget of crimes as were ever recorded against any three individuals in the "Newgate Calendar." He was shocked, very much shocked; puzzled, very much puzzled; as to that fellow Slimstock, he verily believed he was the worst among 'em. Only to think of his tossing off the punch without "Your leave," or "By your leave." Then, as to his word, why he could not bring himself to believe one word he had to say. Then, again, his conscience, "That's all my eye," said he in the big chair, winking knowingly at the justice; "the fellow has no more conscience than them 'ere rattlesnakes as we read of."

Graham could not help concurring in this opinion, and gave the wink to Blackstock, which he had so gratuitously received from the magisterial constable, and it was agreed on all hands that Slimstock was the most questionable member of the party; but what was to be done in the matter of charge?—the charge was withdrawn, or rather not persevered in, in the "Brown Bear" riot; and although there was a vast amount of broken heads and broken lanterns testifying to the riot itself, still the watchmen, who had been called to the discharge of their duties on their

several beats, were no longer present to inculpate the prisoners, and there was no other ground upon which they could be legally detained.

Our friend the constable saw the difficulty, and found himself greatly at a loss how to get out of it; he, had long begun to suspect, from the appearance of Justice Graham in their behalf, that they were not what they appeared to be, and a shrewd suspicion crossed his mind that that fellow Slimstock, with his mouth full of aliases, had been most unmercifully hoaxing him. This was too much for his dignity to bear; it was an insult to the crown which he bore at the head of his staff of office; it was treason, rank treason—of that there could be no mistake; it was a gross insult to Majesty offered in the person of his representative, and demanding the severest penalties; but who was to inflict them? He had no power, and it was a great oversight in the lawmakers that they did not delegate that power to the constable of the night; no matter; so the law stood, and must be obeyed by all loyal and loving subjects.

In this manner did he deliver his rambling thoughts to the justice, with whom he ultimately concluded to consult on the course of his proceedings. Graham, rather waggishly inclined, determined to excite his fears rather than allay

his apprehension, beginning with the modest assurance that he had done wrong, very wrong, in detaining three gentlemen of the most undoubted respectability in custody for upwards of two hours.

"Three," interjected Slimstock; "three, on my life; and I demand in damage five hundred pounds an hour for each of us, deducting the punch, which I confess to have drunk incontinently."

"One of our greatest jurists has said," continued Graham with imperturbable gravity, "that the value of liberty is above all price, and that no awarded damage, however large, can be made sufficient to compensate for one hour's false imprisonment." He paused.

The constable of the night stood aghast; the few straggling watchmen hanging and lounging about, as is their duty, being the body-guard of the functionary of the night, stood aghast; the functionary himself, who had some bewildering ideas about the law, stood aghast. He internally groaned a faint groan, a groan struggling for its suppression. All was silence, and the patient was suffered to recover from his stunning alarm, but only for the purpose of still further excitement.

"Such is the law," proceeded Graham, after a

long pause, adding pompously, "The law of England, which duly estimates the liberty of the humblest, and casts its mantle of protection over the poor equally as over the rich—a law which knows no distinction of persons."

"That's all gammon, between you and me, Mr. Justice Graham; all very well for the outsiders to talk on, but won't do here. There's law for the rich—for them as can afford to pay for it; and law for the poor, as is obliged to pocket it in any way in which it may suit the justice to give it. Law, Mr. Graham, why you knows we measures it out accordin' to circumstances, and we always gives enough of it to the poor devil as can't help hisself."

Our constable had summoned up all his courage in this reply, which was responded to by Slimstock in his usual style of quiet satire, concurring in opinion with the gentleman who had just spoken; lamenting that it was so, but so it was; and then humorously shadowing forth the prospective position of the gentleman when brought up to receive judgment under the verdict of an unbiassed jury for having wantonly, wickedly, and in violation of the laws, incarcerated—that is to say, imprisoned—three most respectable gentlemen on false and groundless charges, of his

own arbitrary will and malice, without any shadow of pretext whatever."

"Bosh, bosh!" roared out the constable, exasperated to the highest.

"I know nothing of Bosh," continued Slimstock; "I know not who he may be, or what he may be, but he must be a personage of great influence if he can stay the judgment of the courts, and a sentence of two years' imprisonment in Coldbath Fields or Horsemonger Lane Gaol, with a fine of two thousand pounds to our Lord the King."

"Bosh; I tell you, bosh," writhed out the other; "bosh—all bosh."

"What is the use of your calling on Bosh, when you know he must be out of hearing?" returned Slimstock, with the greatest coolness, affecting not to understand him. "If Bosh can be of any use to you, why do you not send for him. I suppose you want to settle the matter? Well, I have no objection, provided you come down handsomely. So send for Bosh, and let us hear what he has to say."

The unhappy man could not restrain himself any longer.

"Turn him out, Mr. Graham, turn that fellow out!" he exclaimed, in the violence of his rage;

but Graham was cool and passive; as for Blackstock and Greystock, it was with the greatest difficulty they could conceal their enjoyment of the constable's embarrassment between fear and anger, under Slimstock's provoking humour.

"It is not for me to turn them out," replied Graham, lending himself to the conspirators, who, having the ball at their feet, had bent themselves on playing out the game to the best advantage; "the power rests with you: they are in your custody, not in mine."

"Well, then, Mr. Graham, I hand them over to your custody, upon your undertaking——"

"Undertaking! what undertaking can I give, without knowing upon what charge they are detained?"

"I have no charge—have entered no charge."

"Coldbath Fields," muttered Slimstock audibly.

"Why, then, are they detained as prisoners guilty of some crime or misdemeanour?" demanded Graham gravely.

"They are not detained, Mr. Graham; they may go."

"Horsemonger Lane Gaol," interjected Slimstock.

"Bid that fellow hold his peace, Mr. Graham," cried the desponding man, with voice faltering and countenance paling.

"Two years' hard labour," fell from Slimstock's lips, with a most solemn cadence.

"Put that fellow in the cell," cried the constable, his lips quivering with rage, and his whole countenance distorted by the violence of his excitement.

"A fine of two thousand pounds to our Sovereign Lord the King!" ejaculated Slimstock, nothing dismayed by the order, or deterred by the writhings of his victim.

"Hold! you are exceeding your authority, Mr. Constable," said Graham, with his usual coolness; "and I warn you, in all friendliness, to avoid resorting to such measures as must ultimately end, probably, in your own ruin. If you have any charge entered as against these gentlemen—"

"Gentlemen," cried the constable, sneeringly, between his teeth.

"Yes, gentlemen," retorted Graham; "I repeat, gentlemen!—as you will find, I fear, to your great cost—who have been dragged to your presence, as I learn, without cause of complaint, and detained like felons in custody without the least pretext in justification of this violation of their persons, of their honour, and their liberties."

The poor constable felt very bad; he writhed under the lash of his inexorable tormentors; he

admitted they might be gentlemen for what he knowed, at any rate he would be glad to get quit of them; if he had acted wrong in the matter, he didn't know it, for he never had had such customers afore, and heaven knows he didn't wish to see the likes of them again."

"Unfortunate man," said Slimstock, in a tone of great commiseration, "I pity you, indeed I do. Have you a wife?"

"I have," was dolefully replied.

"And children?"

"Four!"

"Poor, helpless innocents, and your father doomed to two years' hard labour and imprisonment in Coldbath Fields or Horsemonger Lane Gaol," said Slimstock pathetically; "if you had the choice, which would you prefer?"

Had the functionary of the big chair met with anything at hand, it would, in all probability, have been brought suddenly in contact with Slimstock's head; as it was, the head escaped, and the tortured incumbent sank back into his seat.

"There is one thing, however, in which I can render you acceptable service," continued Slimstock, "and that I certainly will do for your poor children's sake. I will obtain a remittance of your two thousand pounds fine, without any interference upon the part of your friend Bosh."

"Bosh be d——d!" roared out the infuriated man, gnashing his teeth in agony.

"And if Bosh will serve you as truly, with reference to your imprisonment with hard labour," continued Slimstock, unmindful of the exclamation, "you may consider yourself a very fortunate fellow."

Even despair, until it has sunk to its greatest depth, and the whole mind is absorbed in impenetrable darkness, will find its rallying point in reviving hope and another struggle for relief. The thought struck him in his bewilderment that he could turn the tables on his tormentors, and relieve himself of the responsibilities which, in his many doubts, weighed heavily on him, by entering upon an examination of that fellow Slimstock, who had charged upon his companions confederacy in crime, and had volunteered his evidence upon the condition of pardon for his own delinquencies. Hope beamed, brightened, and he went to the task with great glee, for whatever might prove the result of his investigation, and of which, in reality, he cared little, it must have the effect of justifying his proceedings, and of averting those consequences with which he had been threatened. To it, then, he went armed with authority, and commenced his interrogation.

After the first preliminary questions, which

had been answered in a former investigation, but which had been interrupted most unseasonably, he proceeded in a circuitous mode of questioning, leading to the main subject, which he hoped to have marked, but entangling himself in inextricable difficulties; venturing, however, a little deeper, he inquired, "Well, sir, if you follow no legal profession or trade, how do you contrive to live?"

"Pretty much as other people do," was the reply.

"I say, sir, how do you get your bread?"

"Of the baker, to be sure."

Puzzled, very much puzzled, painfully chagrined at the prevarication of his witness, and wishing himself well quit of this most embarrassing business, which he had entered into, but which he could not clearly see his way out of, with a stern voice, but despairing energy, he demanded of him to speak what he knew of those men standing near him at the bar, and with whom it appeared he had been associated.

"Nothing of any good," said Slimstock, slily nudging Graham in the ribs, "and nothing worth your worship's knowing, and, what is worse than all, nothing to your liking."

"Answer my question, sir."

"With all my heart. Well, then, that man

Greystock is well known about town, and has as many *aliases* as would cover a sheet of foolscap for your sapiency's wearing. The fellow keeps high company. I have seen him arm-in-arm with the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, and have heard that man Sheridan, whom every one knows, express himself honoured as being admitted to his friendship."

"A little cracked, must be a little cracked," whispered the questioner to Graham.

"I believe not," returned Graham. "All that he says is true."

"And you affirm it?"

"I do."

"Then Heaven help me, or I am lost!" was the response.

"As to the other," continued Slimstock, "I don't know what you can make out of him. He is a great favourite at Court. The King takes the greatest interest in him, although not altogether pleased with him; the Queen considers him in the light of a darling son, and our most fashionable ladies are dying in love for him. In short, sir, he is a prince."

"A prince!" echoed the paralyzed man.

Blackstock looked uneasy. Graham, who knew his man, reassured him.

"Yes, sir, a prince!" cried Slimstock, elevat-

ing his voice, "a prince—we'll say a Persian prince upon his travels, seeking information, and picking up pretty girls to grace his father's court."

"A prince!" ejaculated the worthy constable, in the very abjectness of voice and manner, addressing himself to Graham.

"It is even so," replied the justice gravely, "it is even so."

Handcuffs and prison-bars, fetters and Cold-bath Fields, treason and the Tower, darbies and Horsemonger Lane Gaol, swam before his eyes in panoramic succession, as he sank back in his chair almost in a state of insensibility.

Graham, with his friends at the close of this the last act of that evening's frolic, retired as the curtain fell, reserving their laughter until at a sufficient distance from the scene to indulge in their merriment.

The clock struck five as they arrived at the "Salutation," which was opened ready to receive them, and where over a few bottles of claret and a dish of delicate sandwiches, which had been prepared according to custom, they rattled over the incidents of the past few hours with great humour, and only broke up when the grey of the morning warned them away.

Blackstock, Greystock, and Slimstock shifted their skins, and were no more heard of. It was not the first of their adventures of this kind, but it was the last.

Sheridan, indulging his hearers with some of the reminiscences of his early life only a very few months before his death, related this anecdote with characteristic humour; and although it was evident his bodily health was declining, still with that delightful clearness of intellect and that brilliance of wit which had distinguished him in his earlier and happier days, and which by its fascinations had won for him an undying fame. Sheridan was himself alone, and until his eyes were finally closed against the light of day, retained his mental powers even to the end.

On one of those occasions, alluding to this adventure, which he said was of greater peril than any they had encountered, he vindicated the Prince, who did not contemplate his occasional nocturnal visitation from mere personal gratification, but from a nobler design—that of looking into the condition of the lower orders of the community, the depraved and the destitute, with a view to the suppression of vice and the improvement of those districts in which it was nourished. His ideas were founded in benevolence, and he devoted

great attention to the investigation of the matter, and in contemplating the means by which both might be accomplished.

The world, in all probability, will scarcely give him credit for his intentions, or attribute to him more than a roving desire to mix with licentiousness in its roughest garb, in the sensual gratification of a morbid taste, while the cities of London and Westminster both bear a lasting testimony to the magnificence of his designs and the soundness of his governmental or home policy.

"It was in our night rambles," said Sheridan, "that those plans were formed by which the filthiness of a St. Giles's was transformed into wide and open streets of surpassing beauty, and that a Regent Street shot up out of the wretched abodes of penury and want—the incentive to crime and the positive cause of moral degradation. The home of misery is the home of despair or of man's treason against his fellow-man."

To supply labour for the poor who were disposed to live by labour was one of the principal objects of his plans and designs for the improvement of the Metropolis; to correct and chastise the ruffian who, in violation of every law divine and human, sought his subsistence by rapine, was the other. For the one he supplied the means of subsistence by tearing down the abodes of misery

and erecting on their base splendid dwellings and offices of trade, giving employment to thousands who stood in need; and for the other his mind was actively employed in devising the organization of a vigorous and effective police, by which crime might be restrained by the moral certainty of detection, and the mind of the felon diverted from its courses. "The way to suppress crime" was his remark, on the authority of Sheridan, "is to surround it with insurmountable impediments in the way of its execution—to attach to it extreme hazards, the peril of detection and the improbability of escape. Better to prevent crime than inflict the penalties on commission. I believe it in the nature of man to be led rather than driven, and I firmly believe that when the avenues of crime are closed against him he will turn to honesty as his safest course, and ultimately cling to it as his only safeguard, even when poverty shall afflict him."

These were his maxims and his guide in those after-measures which he suggested and approved on their arrival at maturity in those master-hands to which they had been confided. He was their patron—watched them in their progress—nurtured them in their development by wise suggestions. The Police Bill of Sir Robert Peel emanated from the Regent; the architectural designs

of Nash for Regent Street and Pall Mall East, sweeping away the filth of Whitcomb Street; the opening of a thoroughfare to St. Martin's Church; the clearance of the King's Mews, as it was then called, with the erection of those splendid buildings that adorn Trafalgar Square; the rooting up of the once well-known Bird-cage Walk; the tasteful laying out of St. James's Park, with its foul basin, the depositary of every filthy refuse, its conversion to a beautiful piece of water, with its ample shrubberies, its graceful banks, and romantic islands; the sweeping away of that hotbed of depravity and of vice in every form, Tothill Fields—with its bear-baiting, its bull-fights, and its dog-fights—and the rearing, as if by magic, on its site, those splendid palaces which girt the park;—these were to be numbered among the acts of that magnificent prince who, whatever may be his faults—and they were of a nature more afflictive to himself than to his people—did more for the sanatory improvement of the great metropolis of his empire, and exhibited more taste in the splendour of its adornment, than the acts of any or all of his predecessors, from the Norman Conquest to the period of his own reign. He gave to architectural design a fresh impetus, he called forth the energy of young and rising artists, emulation was rife among them, and the landowner, vying

with his monarch in the luxuriance of his buildings and the conversion of his lands into noble tenements, combined together in rendering London what it is, comparing with that queen of cities, old Rome, in its ancient splendour, with its triumphal columns and its monumental dedications to the heroes of his own age, and the distinguished in science of his own times. Patron of those arts the best calculated to inspire a love of country, and to awaken and keep alive that martial spirit which can alone sustain its independence and the national honour,—if he did not survive to see the completion of his noble works, he lived to see them progressing to perfection.

To form a proper estimate of the man by his acts and by his conduct, we must draw into account the times in which he lived in order to a correct judgment. The war waged against the American colonists and its unsuccessful issue had scattered the seeds of democracy over the length and breadth of the country; secret societies were forming under the guidance and direction of some of the best informed of our transatlantic brethren, whose influences were exerted over their friends and relatives to overthrow a government which had become obnoxious under the administration of Lord North, and the establishment of a republic upon the broad principles which had gained for the colonist

their freedom, and ranked them among the nations. The spirit of democracy was rife and active, although secret and silent.

The King, through his ministers, had become unpopular, although, happily for the safety of his crown, his virtues, together with his affability of manners and his great good-nature, had power over the storm, quelling it in its outbreak.

The Prince of Wales, the heir apparent to that throne which to all appearance was insecure, in allying himself to such men as Fox, Burke, Sheridan, and that powerful party which held in check the minister, exhibited great wisdom and the soundest policy—they were the men of the people, the advocates of the people—and placing himself at the head of that party which stood so pledged, gave an assurance of the reform sought for, of retrenchment and economy in the public expenditures, and a consequent relief from the heavy burdens of taxation.

The main prop of the throne, in this condition of affairs, was that of George Prince of Wales, at the head, although not the leader, of opposition; and the buzzing reports of his being seen among the people, mixing with the people, not as a prince, but a man among men, had its equal share of influence; confidence was sustained, and insubordination kept down.

CHAPTER III.

POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE—AMERICAN COLONISTS—REFUSES £20,000—ATTACK ON RIGBY—ROCKINGHAM ADMINISTRATION—UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—COALITION MINISTRY—THE ANGRY BOY—NO TORY—PITT'S MINISTRY.

We turn from those scenes in which at times the taste of this surprising man indulged, to follow him as a representative of the people in the Commons House of Parliament, in the discharge of those public duties which he had taken upon himself. It is amusing to contemplate him in his erratic flights, in the full enjoyment of his humour, his wit, and his love of relaxation from the formal stiffness of what is called polite society; and then, again, to trace him in the halls of debate, exhibiting the majesty of mind incorruptible, sustaining with masterly eloquence the great cause (which is of the people), good government, economy in public expenditure, and the inherent right of every man to vote for his representative in the councils of the nation. Sheridan was a Whig in politics, but although he had joined the party headed by Charles James Fox, the great opposition leader in the Commons House of Parliament, he was no partisan, bound

down by no tie debarring him the exercise of his own free judgment, but as an independent member, justifying himself in the vote he rendered, which was in full accordance with his own conscience.

Bold, eloquent, earnest in debate, he very early proved himself a powerful advocate and uncompromising opponent; his satire, when called into requisition, was severe, his lash keen, his wit startling. He could command the attention of the House at any time; whenever he rose to the question there was a brilliance of imagination at all times accompanying his argument which never failed to excite the deepest interest in his auditors, whether of the party to which he had allied himself, or of the administration he opposed.

His advocacy was at all times the constitutional rights of the people. He advocated the rights of the American colonists, at that time occupying the serious attention of the House and of the country; and upon the occasion of a motion for a vote of thanks to Lord Cornwallis and General Hinton, on the 27th of November, 1780, expressed himself in the strongest terms reprobative of the American war as fratricidal, unchristian, treasonable, inasmuch as it was waged not less against the security of the throne itself than the inalienable right of the colonists to

self-government. The march of liberal opinions, he said, cannot be stayed, its course is onwards; the colonies, in spite of all opposition, must and will be free. "He had no objection to the vote of thanks to the gallant officers, but he should like to see it accompanied by a vote of censure on that incapable ministry who had wasted the best blood and treasure of the country in a fruitless effort to enslave a people sprung from ourselves, who, with an heroic constancy of purpose, and in an inexorable devotion to the cause they had embraced, determined on liberty or death." In winding up his speech, which had been listened to with breathless attention, from the boldness of its assumptions, and, as it was so considered, its revolutionary spirit, he satirically apologised to Mr. Rigby, one of the administration, for not "answering some things which had fallen from him in the same ludicrous strain in which he chose to view everything except what *immediately related* to his *own interest*.

"In his own (Sheridan's) opinion, there were some things too serious for ridicule, and the question before them, if ever any question did, merited a serious and grave discussion. He acknowledged that the hon. gentleman had a fund of drollery and humour; but he liked his

ingenuity, his humour, and his counsels, better than his political arguments."

Sheridan was but a young member of the house, scarcely warmed into his seat, and but little familiar with parliamentary usage and party intrigue. He had, on the delivery of his maiden speech, been rather uncourteously treated by Mr. Rigby, and he never lost sight of an opportunity of returning the compliment to that wily politician, a veteran in the service of political craft. But Sheridan's well-known opinions on the subject of the American war, and the confidence in his great powers, which were then only in a state of development, had attracted the attention of the secret agents of the American Congress, then in London, who were anxious to obtain their independence rather by parliamentary influence than by the sword. Feeling the justice of their cause, and the necessity, if possible, of rescuing their bleeding country from a continuance of the war, which, although it was being carried on disastrously and hopelessly for the mother country, still was severely felt, with all its accompanying horrors, on the soil which it desecrated and the people it impoverished; they turned to Sheridan for his aid in bringing this state of things to a speedy termination. They knew him to possess but slender resources in sustentation of his establish-

ment, that those resources were entirely dependent upon the use and exercise of those vast powers with which nature had endowed him; that his talent was his estate; and with these views they waited on him as they would on a counsellor, with his brief and with his retaining fee. Jefferson, the author of the "American Declaration of Independence," whose brother was an actor on the English stage of some repute, had formed the highest estimate of the talent of Sheridan, and associated with himself Albert Gallatin and Silas Deane for the purpose of terminating the war of the colonies and of obtaining their independence by the influence of the British Parliament.

Through this brother, who had a ready means of intercourse and personal communication with Sheridan in his professional pursuits, the tender was made of securing to Sheridan a sum of *twenty thousand pounds*, for his advocacy of the American cause in the Commons House of Parliament. The tender was made delicately, but refused with a firmness consistent with that high and lofty mind which had taught itself to struggle through pecuniary embarrassments, and maintain its dignified independence.

Moore, in his "Life of Sheridan," alludes to this fact, and doubts whether the American

finances were in a condition to offer so tempting a bait, or that Sheridan had sufficient virtue to resist it. The offer was made, the money secured, but Sheridan was above temptation, as many acts of his after-life have testified: in the discharge of his public duties, and the maintenance of his honour as a public man, he was incorruptible.

The consequence of this offer, which he rejected with disdain, as an insult offered to his honour and integrity as a representative of the people, was that while he maintained the cause of the patriots in such questions as came before the House and were submitted to debate, he resolved on giving it no other aid.

He was a lover of liberty, an admirer of Washington, an unflinching democrat in its liberal and enlightened sense, but shared not in the blasphemies of a Paine or the infidelism of a Jefferson or a Deane.

Sheridan laid no great claims to piety, and the opinion prevailed that he was not remarkable for his attention to morality; but it would be difficult for the closest scrutiny to find a blot in his public character; and, as to his private, so far as opinion went, he was much more sinned against than sinning.

Mr. Solicitor-General Mansfield, on the 2nd

day of May, 1781, brought in "A Bill for preventing certain Abuses and Profanations of the Lord's Day, called Sunday." This bill produced a very warm debate and considerable excitement, as being intolerant, and interfering with the privileges of the people. Sheridan opposed it as not going far enough in the correction of an evil which, on the authority of Bishop Porteous, prevailed to an alarming and demoralizing extent. It appeared that certain houses had been opened on the Sabbath for the discussion of questions on religious and other matters, which were conducted with the most shameless disregard to decency, and at which doctrines were advanced subversive of all religion, which were eagerly caught at by the vulgar and illiterate.

The advocates of the bill, using the language of the learned prelate, contended that "It constrained no one from professing that mode of religion, and joining in that form of public worship which his conscience best approves. It restrains no one from speaking, conversing, or writing, on religious subjects. It imposes no other restraint than this, which is surely no very great hardship, that no one shall either pay or be paid for talking blasphemy or profaneness in a public room on the Lord's day. It takes away no other liberty but the liberty of burlesquing

Scripture, and making religion a public amusement and a public trade."

With these declarations, amply and powerfully supported as they were by most undeniable testimony, Sheridan was willing to give the bill his support. But it did not go far enough. He would extend it to "the suppression of gambling-houses, to the vice of gaming, and that most pernicious species of it, lotteries. He hoped, as the learned gentleman who brought in the bill had already stood forward not only as the *censor morum*, but as the *arbiter elegantiarum*—at once the Cato and Petronius of the age—he hoped he would be active in his new character, and would join in putting a stop to lottery-gaming by bringing in a bill to abolish all the present lottery offices, and prevent the opening of any new one in future."

Sheridan was no gambler, but was opposed to it in every form, as actively subversive of the public morals, and extending its influence to the very dregs of society.

In proof of Sheridan's independence of party during the same session of parliament, on Charles James Fox bringing in his bill for the repeal of the Marriage Act, Sheridan spoke and divided against it to the great chagrin of Fox.

Some passages in his speech on the resolutions

of censure on his Majesty's ministers, moved by Lord John Cavendish, deserve to be recorded as evidence of his sarcastic wit, his firm adhesion to the freedom of America, and his opposition to the murderous policy of the war. His attack upon Rigby is masterly.

"He meant to speak to the purpose, but he wished not to be judged by the test laid down by the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Rigby), for he meant to give no offence in what he should say; though it was true the rule had been proposed on high authority; for, undoubtedly, if the degree of offence which speeches gave was to be considered *criterion of eloquence!* the right hon. gentleman must be looked up to as the *Demosthenes* of that assembly."

"He (Rigby) had acted, however, in that day's debate perfectly consistent. He had assured the House that he *thought* the noble lord *ought to resign* his office, yet he would give *his* vote for his *remaining in it.* The right hon. gentleman had long declared that he *thought* the American war *ought* to be *abandoned*, but he had uniformly *given his* vote for its continuance. He (Sheridan) did not mean, however, to *insinuate* any *motives* for such conduct. He believed the right hon. gentleman to have been sincere. He believed that, as a member of Parliament, as a Privy

Councillor, as a private gentleman, he had always *detested* the American war as much as any man, but he had never been enabled to *persuade* the paymaster (Mr. Rigby himself was the paymaster) that it was a *bad* war, and unfortunately, in whatever character *he* spoke, it was the *paymaster* who *always voted* in that House."

Sheridan was a bitter opponent. Rigby had provoked his irony, and smarted under it; he found by experience that flippant wit is a dangerous weapon to employ in opposition to that which is of a more sterling quality.

The administration of Lord North, which, in the matter of the war with the colonies, had involved the nation in unparalleled difficulties, was drawing to a close; it had lost the confidence of the country, although sustained by Parliament, and the King had pertinaciously persisted in resisting the offers of resignation.

The Earl of Surrey had given notice of a motion for the 20th day of March, declaratory of a want of confidence in the Ministry—a motion similar to those which had been outvoted upon former occasions. At no period since the commencement had excitement so powerfully prevailed. There were never so many members of the House assembled together as on that day,

while the lobbies and galleries were crowded with spectators to an unparalleled extent. The report had gone abroad that the Ministry had resigned, and that his Majesty had accepted their resignation, although with the greatest reluctance.

On the sitting of the House, the Earl of Surrey and Lord North started on their feet at the same time, the one to make his motion, the other to move an adjournment on the ground that such motion was rendered unnecessary by the actual resignation of Ministers—a great deal of angry discussion took place, criminative and recriminative, in which Sheridan took no part; he had been active in opposition, but on the surrender of the party, his conduct was marked by a generous silence.

The House adjourned to the 25th, in order to afford time for the formation of a new ministry, and again to the 11th day of April, when a Cabinet was formed under the auspices of the Marquis of Rockingham.

The new Cabinet was popular, uniting as it did the most distinguished Whig members, no less celebrated for their talents and ability to govern than for their liberal opinions:—

The Marquis of Rockingham, *Premier*; the Earl of Shelburne and Charles James Fox, *Sec-*

retaries of State; Lord John Cavendish, *Chancellor of the Exchequer;* Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Thomas Orde, Esqs., *Under-Secretaries of State;* Admiral Hood, created a Viscount, *First Lord of the Admiralty;* Duke of Grafton, *Privy Seal;* Lord Camden, *President of the Council;* Lord Thurlow, *Chancellor;* Duke of Richmond, *Master-General of the Ordnance,* &c., &c.

It was a powerful cabinet, if it could have united in one consistent course of action, corresponding with the times and the public requirements; but the progress of liberal opinions was slow in its approaches to those whose brows were wreathed with heraldic honours—the coronet and the mantle of an hereditary nobility. "The people had rights, but knew not how to enjoy them," was the doctrine of the peerage; with the further assumption that the rights and privileges of the masses were much more secure in the hands of the lords than in their own keeping. Sheridan demurred and Fox resisted.

We have to contemplate Sheridan in his new position! Scarcely eighteen months a member of the House, and now qualified to hold office under Government, and as a member of that Government in one of its principal executive departments—unsought for, but invited!

It is rather remarkable that Sheridan, as a member of the Administration, took but small share in the discussions of the House; he spoke eloquently on the question, "The affairs of Ireland;" and with some force, but with more wit and raillery, on William Pitt's motion for a reform in Parliament, and spoke much in favour of the motion, which was rejected upon a division.

The death of the Marquis of Rockingham terminated the existence of this short-lived administration, which had only preserved its unity by his courtesy, and was finally dissolved by the resignation of Fox, who could not concur with a majority in the cabinet headed by Lord Shelburne. Fox defended himself with sound reasoning, adding, "That no man would blame him for quitting a cabinet in which he must have been a mere puppet, for he could as well tell how every measure would be carried the moment he knew the mover as he could formerly tell how gentlemen would vote on grand political questions in that House."

"Was such a cabinet fit for him to remain in? Could he submit to be responsible for measures which he disapproved of, and lend his name to a system in which he had no share.

"With respect to the fear of letting in the old

administration," he said, "there was none, for that House would not suffer it, the people of England would not suffer it—indeed, no man, he believed, would attempt it."

Sheridan retired from office without any remark, and, to all appearance, with indifference. He once remarked, "That he had never actually desired to be trammelled with office, and never advanced a claim."

A new administration was speedily formed, or rather the old one resuscitated, with the loss of its most celebrated statesmen:—The Earl of Shelburne, *Premier;* Honourable William Pitt, *Chancellor of the Exchequer;* Lord Grantham and Thomas Townshend, *Principal Secretaries of State.*

Peace, peace, was the only ground on which the Shelburne administration could sustain itself in that House; peace with America, and a recognition of her independence, that independence which had been so powerfully advocated by Fox, by Burke, and by Sheridan, that peace which the nation demanded. It was upon the condition of a general peace that the Shelburne administration was entrusted with office—peace upon any terms not inconsistent with the honour and dignity of the country.

In the unsettled state of the times, and the

distracted condition of the public mind, tremulating between loyalty and disaffection, with a strong leaning to democracy, or rather to American governmental policy, in its declaration of public rights and its heavy denunciation of power that was not in the keeping of the people, it was a difficult matter to form any administration which could become acceptable to the popular will. Faith in the Whigs had been arrested by the failure of Fox in his "India Bill;" that faith was but slightly reposed in the Rockingham party, and the Shelburne administration was as suddenly brought to a close as its immediate predecessor.

Articles of peace were signed at Paris with all the powers then at war—France, Spain, and Holland—on the 20th of November, 1782, and with America on the 30th of the same, by which her independence was secured; but the credit of the Ministry gained little by the act which had been forced on them by the voice of the nation, and so powerfully responded to by their Whig opponents, whom they had displaced.

A reunion of the Whigs was the hope and expectation of the public, and anxiously looked for by those who equally dreaded the revival of the old system, and the mischiefs of a weak and un-

settled government. It does not, appear, however, that any advances were made towards effecting such an arrangement; the materials were too discordant to be united, too many opinions prevailed, too many theories started, of a character too much opposed to each other to settle down in any regular system; while the parties themselves were too actively engaged in crimination and recrimination to listen to reason and soothe themselves down to a unity in action.

There could be no union with Charles James Fox and William Pitt, although the latter had entered the political arena, and thrown down the gauntlet in his famous Reform Bill while a member of opposition; but not renewed when in power, and having gained the King's ear. There could be no union between Fox and Pitt: each of them giants in their strength, equal in a division of the House on party questions, and violently opposed to each other in public policy, there could be no union between them; and without some such coalition there could be no endurant government.

It is scarcely to be wondered at, then, under such circumstances, that whatever the differences of opinion existing on the question of the American war, now that that question was finally settled, the idea should be entertained that a

coalition with Lord North might be made advantageous to the interests of both parties, and to that of the public business. Such a union was contemplated by the hostile chieftains North and Fox. The policy was sound in one sense, since it was well known the King was not at all favourable to the Whigs, and neither party could stand alone against that third influence which was rising and gaining strength under that young but politic statesman William Pitt, who, to the popularity he derived from his father the great Earl of Chatham, had already given promise of talents of the highest order, united with a firmness of purpose and great promptitude of decision, inciting the confidence of the supporters of his principles, and also of the united aristocracy. Never was the political atmosphere so clouded since the revolution of 1688 as at this period; never were the elements of discord so rife: public confidence was broken up; secret and treasonable associations were spreading their baneful influence throughout the land, the throne itself was jeopardized.

A wide and extended government, uniting strength with inflexible firmness in the prosecution of public measures, was demanded of the times, and it was conceived that the proposed coalition was the only means by which such a

government could be formed. Sheridan alone *opposed* the union, on the ground that men who had so long sat in opposition to each other in political bias could not be brought to combine in an efficient, practical, or working order. He entreated Fox to consider well ere he concluded the negotiation, which had been some time under discussion, but received for his reply, "The thing is done—settled."

It is not to be entertained as a matter of doubt, but settled as a mooted question, that the coalescing parties were more powerfully influenced by the desire of forming a cabinet among themselves of an enduring character than that of satisfying the claims of the people and the wishes of the nation. Within the period of two years three several administrations had been formed under as many distinct leaders, and each of them had failed in carrying out their state measures of policy, by reason of that powerful opposition which the ostensible party leaders incessantly rallied against their opponents. Hence the cry of parliamentary reform—a reform by which the people might be more faithfully represented and the borough system abolished. Fox and his party stood pledged to reform, and by the union it was relied upon that Lord North and his supporters would yield to a measure which it was evident had now

become a measure of necessity; but the more sagacious, the reflective, judging of the inconsistency of such a union, had no fear of hazarding their doubts of its realizing the objects for which it had been formed, while at the same time a much more serious question agitated the public mind affecting the honesty of the parties themselves, implying that it was formed for no other purpose than that of permanently securing power, with its extensive patronage, overwhelming by its union a weakened opposition.

Lord North could not be rendered popular; he was not, in the temper of the times, capable of an act which could redeem him from public odium; it had been expressed against him in the loudest, coarsest tones, and it is idle to suppose that even the warmest advocate among his personal friends could remain in ignorance of the feelings his ministerial conduct had inspired: it is true that when no longer in office those expressions of public opinion had become softened down to a milder temperature, but although to all appearance languishing—inert, still, upon the slightest evidence of his restoration to power, the slowest apprehension might have perceived the roused lion starting from his slumbers.

It would have appeared to be something very like an act of insanity upon the part of Fox, who

had so eloquently denounced, so powerfully opposed, and so vehemently charged with corruption the fallen minister—who had, by the weight of his charges, brought down upon him the indignation of the country—it would, we repeat, have looked very like an act of insanity upon the part of Fox to have formed a political union with such a man, so proscribed; but that the motives were too transparent to conceal the object, and that a real patriotism or love of country, with its best interests, had very little to do with the compromise. It is evident in the whole of this arrangement private interests swayed the judgment, and superseded public duty.

Sheridan, admitted as a most useful member of the Whigs, quick and intelligent, was considered only in the light of a political student by its leading statesmen. The acuteness of his wit, his admirable satire, always forcibly applied when employed, gave him rather a high standing in the House; he could always command its attention, but he had not arrived at that point in the exhibition of his powers when his counsels and advisings would find their due weight with the long-practised professors of the art of government and of political intrigue. They held him in no higher estimation than that of being a useful and agreeable speaker, who could excite the House at any

time from the dulness of debate, and by the pointed severity of his raillery keep in check the influence of the opposing party on the temper of the House. But as an adviser, as one whose counsels deserved attention, he was most lamentably underrated; hence his advice to Fox was received with an incredulous smile, and disregarded altogether. Sheridan, however, was too shrewd a politician not to foresee its consequences, and the result proved the quickness of his discernment and the soundness of his judgment; for scarcely was it known that the fated coalition had been formed, when the expression of public opinion was against it, and was pronounced in no measured terms of reprobation.

This ill-fated cabinet occupied the ministerial benches on the 2nd day of April, 1783, and spun out a short and miserable, if not to say a lamentable, existence, expiring in the following month of December, when a new cabinet was formed, with the Right Hon. William Pitt as Chancellor of the Exchequer, around whom the voice of the nation rallied, and who consequently became armed with a power unequalled in administration. The country had become fatigued with the incessant changes which had been taking place for the last few years, and with party rivalry; the Whig influence had passed away, and the

sound discretion of the landed, mercantile, and moneyed interests rallied round the new minister, who had already exhibited great firmness and consistency of character, inheriting at the same time the mantle of his father, the great Earl of Chatham, while he stood pledged to the cause of parliamentary reform.

Sheridan had foreseen the utter prostration of the Whig party, with which he had allied, and saved himself from the odium which attended its fall by the opinions he had expressed with reference to its impolicy and instability. Under this coalition he held the office of Under-Secretary of the Treasury jointly with Mr. Richard Burke, the brother of the celebrated orator.

Parliamentary reform was loudly demanded, and it was expected, under the administration of Pitt, the pledge he had given would be redeemed, and reform would be conceded in the total extinction of the close or rotten borough system. It was a glorious advent for this young and rising statesman, the prostration of the confederates who had forfeited all claims to public confidence, which centred itself in himself and in his colleagues. Pitt's administration was rendered firm and secure by the very means which his opponents adopted to unseat him: Fox, Burke, and Sheridan in opposition lost nothing of their weight in public esteem,

and were looked up to as a necessary check on Government; but as cabinet ministers, the country was to their appointment wholly and absolutely adverse.

Pitt, cold, biting, and occasionally bitterly sarcastic, was but little pleased with the levity and wit of Sheridan, who, in defence of his own conduct under the coalition, attacked the right hon. gentleman on the same ground of inconsistency in his alliance with the Tory Lord Advocate Dundas, who had maintained such opposite principles to his own. In a speech of more than ordinary brilliance, he ruffled the temper of the Minister Pitt, who, on the authority of the *Parliamentary Register*, was pointedly severe on the gentleman who had spoken against the address to the King, and more particularly on Mr. Sheridan.

"No man," he said, "admired more than he did the abilities of that right hon. gentleman—the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns and epigrammatic point; and if they were reserved for the proper stage, they would no doubt receive what the honourable gentleman's abilities always did receive, the plaudits of the audience; and it would be his fortune *sui plausu gaudere theatri*. But this was not the proper scene for the exhibition of those elegances."

Sheridan, rising to explain, said that "On the particular sort of personality which the right hon. gentleman had thought proper to make use of, he need not make any comment. The propriety, the taste, the gentlemanly point of it must have been obvious to the House. But let me assure the right honourable gentleman that I do now, and will at any time he chooses to repeat the sort of allusion, meet it with the most sincere good-humour. Nay, I will say more—flattered and encouraged by the right honourable gentleman's panegyric on my talents—if ever I again engage in the compositions he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption—to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters—the character of the *Angry Boy* in the 'Alchemist.'"

We believe we have before remarked on his extreme sensitiveness in the matter of his theatrical engagements. Pitt had touched upon his vulnerable point, and we can hardly sufficiently admire the tact and coolness with which he received the shaft, and turned it upon his adversary. Pitt was silenced, the members admonished, and no one was ever after bold enough to trespass a sarcasm on his personal affairs.

Among his papers found upon his decease was the following *jeu d'esprit* in his own handwriting,

admirably hitting off the members of the Administration in the cast of the characters of the "Alchemist."

"ADVERTISEMENT EXTRAORDINARY.

"We hear that, in consequence of a hint lately given in the House of Commons, the play of the 'Alchemist' is certainly to be performed by a set of gentlemen for our diversion in a private apartment of Buckingham House.

"The characters thus described in the old edition of Ben Jonson are to be represented in the following manner. The old practice of *men* playing the *female* parts being adopted—

SUBTLE, the Alchemist	Lord Shelburne.
FACE, the Housekeeper	The Lord Chancellor.
DOL COMMON, their Colleague	The Lord Advocate.
ABEL DRUGGER, a Tobacco Man	Lord Effingham.
EPICURE MAMMON	Mr. Rigby.
TRIBULATION	Dr. Jenkinson.
ANANIAS, a Little Pastor	Mr. Hall.
KASTRIL, the Angry Boy	Mr. Wm. Pitt.
DAME PLIANT	Gen. Conway.
SURLY	His Majesty."

Sheridan was an amusing opponent, and not less powerful in being amusing; the readiness of his wit, and the agreeable humour with which he displayed it, always attracted the attention of the House. Upon one occasion, the discussion on the Receipt Tax, a country member facetiously proposed as its substitute a tax upon "Tombstones," which Sheridan, in his usual style, warmly commended.

"Such a tax," he said, "indeed, was not easily evaded, and could not be deemed oppressive, as it would only be *once* paid; but so great was the spirit of clamour against any tax on receipts, that he should not wonder if it extended to them, and that it should be asserted that, persons having paid the last debt, the debt of nature, Government had resolved they should pay a receipt tax, and have it stamped over their grave. Nay, with so extraordinary a degree of inveteracy were some committees in the City and elsewhere actuated, that, if a receipt tax of the nature in question were enacted, he should not be greatly surprised if it were soon after published that such committees had unanimously resolved that they would never be buried, in order to avoid paying the tax, but had determined to lie above ground, or have their ashes consigned to family urns, in the manner of the ancients.

"Taxes, in whatever form they may be produced," he remarked, "would always be found oppressive, more particularly so to some one or other class of the community whom it would more materially affect; thus, the minister imposing them becomes partially obnoxious to the many, although in the discharge of his duties, in meeting the exigencies of the state, he may have main-

tained himself with more than ordinary judgment, ability, and discretion. *Popularity is not always to be taken in evidence of a soundness in the exercise of an enlightened policy or of a pure patriotism; on the contrary, it is too often the fruit of a mean and shuffling ambition, the knavish means of obtaining power, to abuse it.*"

Sheridan was opposed to Toryism, as the relic of despotism; his early associations, together with those prejudices which had assailed him in his youth and followed him in his career of public life, had left their impressions on a mind strong, ardent, and independent, too deeply rooted to be torn up, or trodden down by those who might trace their lineage to the darker days of feudalism, and their hereditary rank and fortunes to the ensanguined hands of the desperate adventurer, whose title-deeds were attested by the sword and signed with the blood of an enslaved people. Sheridan was no Tory, yet he failed not in his respect for that true nobility which, clothed with the highest honours, felt itself not dishonoured in associating with genius, talent, and learning, and recognising its possessors as the truly UNTITLED GREAT. He honoured the patriotism of those noble lords who, as the worthy successors of the barons of Magna Charta celebrity, held to the rights of the people

as a constitutional demand upon the Crown, and which it was treasonable to resist.

Sheridan was a Whig according to the popular idea of the constitution of that political association, but he was no Whig in the strict sense of the word—in those party measures, which were to be sustained or opposed, not on account of merits, not on conscientious grounds of support or censure, but simply on account of the source from whence they sprung. He was a reformer, but his views of reform did not associate with those of his colleagues. He held that every man who paid a direct tax in support of the state had an inalienable right to representation, and every man who had a stake to defend, whether in house or land, or in the public funds, or on mortgage securities; but he strenuously denied universal suffrage. He held that in the change of times those ancient boroughs which had fallen into decay should be disfranchised, but that no man should be disqualified from rendering his vote at the polls by these means, but that the whole country should be divided into districts, that a register of persons qualified for every district should be duly kept, and that no person not registered should be permitted to vote at any election.

"The whole thing is very easily arranged,"

he said on one occasion, when the subject was under private discussion; "simple and easy if the parties proposing reform were sincere in their desire of obtaining it; but, as to universal suffrage, I am afraid we should invite a greater disease than that which now exists—a disease, in short, without any remedy. It is all very fine, an exalted notion, and admirably adapted to the purpose for which it is employed, that is, in alluring and deceiving the vulgar in the belief that universal suffrage will render the price of bread cheap, of labour dear, rents easy, and taxes abolished. It is good doctrine on the eve of an election, and sounds well in Parliament; but if ever it should be resorted to, we shall find ourselves in the condition of the bankrupt who, having wound up his estate without assets, leaves his creditors in clamour and in equal ruin."

Sheridan was by no means radical in politics; in other words, he was no advocate for throwing the reins of government into the hands of a people with whom the abuse of power would be the natural consequence; he held that the elective franchise should only be committed to those who could estimate its value and reason on its importance. "That man," he would say, "who knew how to keep his accounts, with prudence enough to reserve a standing balance in his favour,

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was the best protectionist under equal laws and equal administration of the rights and privileges of the people, for in the maintenance of his own he gives security to theirs."

The fall of the coalition cabinet was the elevation of that young and intrepid minister William Pitt, who, in the twenty-fourth year of his age, assumed the reins of government; and, at a period when the spread of republicanism was threatening the foundation of royalty, and the factious state of the Commons House of Parliament had reduced it to the lowest grade or a mere mockery with its electors. Lord North had rendered himself obnoxious to the Crown, and Fox by his union not much less so to the people;—under these circumstances it was the singular good fortune of Pitt to be placed in the gap which had been opened for him by the imbecility and weakness of his opponents, and to become vested with a power which they had misused. He was the first minister, we believe, who enjoyed the confidence of the Crown with the confidence of the people, while suffering continued defeats in Parliament from the people's representatives. It was evident in this case that the Commons House were influenced by other interests than those of their constituents; hence no clearer evidence of the necessity of parliamentary reform. But Pitt had

not made up his mind thoroughly to the provisions of an act which might weaken the administrative power, and, unless judiciously wrought out, neither satisfy the desires of the people in checking the growth of democracy, or the King himself in the security of the throne.

Scarcely equalled in point of firmness and decision of character, Pitt had determined to hold to office; and, although vigorously opposed by the coalition now on the Opposition benches, and often reduced to a minority on division, still enduring the biting taunts of his adversaries with the contemptuous expression of a resolute and defiant bearing, he bore down all before him in the calmness of his address and by his indomitable energy. Whatever opinions may be formed of the soundness of his ministerial policy, there could be but one of the splendour of his genius, the vast and comprehensive powers of his sublimed mind, and his inflexible love of country. He was a patriot in the truest sense; the love of country governed all his measures. No minister ever succeeding to office enjoyed so unlimitedly the confidence of his sovereign, and so entirely that of a reflective thinking people, banded together for the support of the Crown and the constitution against the fitful theories of disappointed men, who, in the madness of their devotion to

the new and untried doctrines of the New World, would have torn down the ancient institutions of their own land, and have effaced for ever the brightness of its glory.

These were trying times, requiring something like superhuman energy to repress the factious spirit of the humbler classes of society, who had felt themselves ground down by an oppressive taxation in supporting a fratricidal war, which they had denounced, and opposing a freedom which they claimed as a birthright. The fanciful theory of self-government was in active circulation among the French propagandists, and as greedily seized upon by the insurgent spirits at home, who sought to live without labour, and had been inspired by sedition to believe in the pernicious doctrine of equality, of equal rights, and an equal distribution of property! Wretched delusion! inflaming the passions, inciting to crime, to blasphemy and incendiarism; subversive of all law, either human or divine, and raising by its own means the scaffold for the immolation of its votaries.

William Pitt was the right man in the right place, and at the right time to keep in check this dangerous delusion, which had its advocates among men atheistical and unprincipled—the secret movers of secret societies wherein they

might hatch their treasons and propagate the heresies of a Paine, a Rousseau, or a Voltaire.

A variety of causes had combined to produce this state of things, and nothing so much as the dissemination of the tracts of the so-styled new school of philosophy, which based itself on the ruins of Church faith and the total subversion of all moral obligations. The Whig party denied the existence of such a state of things, and challenged the minister for evidence, but the fact was too notorious for doubt, and the minister too wary to announce or even most distantly to allude to that system of espionage, which necessity demanded, and by which he was kept advised even of their most secret movements.

Sheridan took small share in those debates affecting this question, from conscientious scruples. Although not fully aware of the extent of those secret and treasonable associations, still he had formed some opinions of their existence; and while as a member of the Opposition he could not *avow* his approval of the measures of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he secretly felt that they were necessary to public security.

But the power of this extraordinary man, expanding to the occasion, was now to be called into more active requisition than that of mere wrangling on minor points, and in which to display the

fertility of his genius and the brilliancy of his wit. The long-talked-of impeachment of Warren Hastings, which had periodically occupied the attention of Parliament since 1782, suddenly, and by the defection of Pitt, who had hitherto sustained the cause of Hastings in the resistance of impeachment, came to a close in the resolution of the House of bringing him to trial for high crimes and misdemeanours committed during his government in India. But it must not be forgotten that it was Sheridan—in that matchless speech, that master-piece of eloquence which astonished the House, which paralyzed and prostrated the friends of Warren Hastings in his defence,—that decided the question of impeachment, and left him to answer for his deeds in like manner with any other criminal.

This great speech was delivered on the 7th day of February, 1787, which we shall give entire in the best report which has been handed down to us, with the opinions of the greatest orators of that day, who rivalled each other in testimony of its greatness.

CHAPTER IV.

IMPEACHMENT OF WARREN HASTINGS—THE GREAT BEGUM SPEECH—OPINIONS OF FOX, PITT, AND BURKE—SHERIDAN'S GREATEST TRIUMPH.

THE Speaker in the chair, the House crowded, every seat occupied, and the galleries and lobbies filled to repletion with an anxious audience drawn together to hear the charges which were to be brought against the late Governor-General of British India. On the order of the day being disposed of, Mr. Sheridan rose, pursuant to notice, of motion, and during the space of five hours and forty minutes commanded the attention and admiration of the House by an oration (says a contemporary) of unexampled eloquence, uniting the most convincing closeness and accuracy of argument with the most luminous precision and perspicuity of language, and alternately giving force and energy to truth by solid and substantial reasoning, and enlightening the most extensive and involved subjects with the purest clearness of logic and the brightest splendour of rhetoric.

Every prejudice, every prepossession, was gradually overcome by the force of this extraordinary

combination of keen but liberal discrimination, of brilliant yet argumentative wit.

It will be a permanent record, says the same authority, of Mr. Sheridan's unrivalled abilities, that on this trying occasion, which, of all others, had divided not only the House of Commons but the nation at large into a variety of parties, this memorable speech produced almost universal union. It is impossible to attempt more than an outline of this unprecedented exertion of talents and judgment, while it is deeply to be deplored that Sheridan could not be prevailed upon to assist in its publication. We know of our own knowledge that Debrett, the bookseller of Piccadilly, one of the most eminent publishers of the day, offered him one thousand guineas for a copy of his speech. All that is left for us therefore is to furnish a faithful miniature of an unequalled original.

Mr. Sheridan commenced his speech by observing "that, had it been possible to have received, without a violation of the established rules of Parliament, the paper which the hon. member (Mr Dempster) had just now read, he should willingly have receded from any forms of the House, for the purpose of obtaining new lights and further illustration on the important subject then before them: not indeed, that on

the present occasion he found himself so ill-prepared as merely, for this reason, to be prevented from proceeding to the discharge of his duty; neither, to speak freely, was he inclined to consider any explanatory additions to the evidence of Sir Elijah Impey so much framed to elucidate as to perplex and contradict.

"Needless was it to his present purpose to require Sir Elijah Impey legally to recognize what had been read in his name by the hon. gentleman. In fact, neither the informality of any subsisting evidence nor the adducement of any new explanations from Sir Elijah Impey could make the slightest impression upon the vast and strong body of proof which he should now bring forward against Warren Hastings.

"Yet, if any motive could have so far operated upon him as to make him industriously seek for a renewed opportunity of questioning Sir Elijah, it would result from his fresh and indignant recollection of the low and artful stratagem of delivering to the members and others, in this last period of parliamentary inquiry, printed handbills of defence, the contents of which bespoke a presumptuous and empty boast of completely refuting all which at any time had or could be advanced against Mr. Hastings, on the subject of the fourth article in the general charge of a right

hon. member (Mr. Burke). But even this was far beneath his notice. The rectitude and strength of his cause was not to be prejudiced by such pitiful expedients; nor should he waste a moment in counteracting measures which, though insidious, were proportionately frivolous and unavailing; nor would he take up the time of the committee with any general argument to prove that the subject of the charge which it fell to his lot to bring forward was of great moment and magnitude.

"The attention which Parliament had paid to the affairs of India for many sessions past, the voluminous productions of their committees on that subject, the various proceedings in that House respecting it, their own strong and pointed resolutions, the repeated recommendations of his Majesty, and their reiterated assurance of paying due regard to those recommendations, as well as various acts of the Legislature,—were all of them undeniable proofs of the moment and magnitude of the consideration, and incontrovertibly established this plain broad fact, that Parliament directly acknowledges that the British name and character had been dishonoured and rendered detestable throughout India by the malversation and crimes of the principal servant of the East India Company. That fact having been esta-

blished beyond all question by themselves, and by their own acts, there needed no argument on his part to induce the committee to see the importance of the subject about to be discussed upon that day, in a more striking point of view than they themselves had held it up to public observation.

"There were, he knew, persons without doors, who affected to ridicule the idea of prosecuting Mr. Hastings, and who, not inconsistently, redoubled their exertions in proportion as the prosecution became more serious, to increase their sarcasms upon the subject by asserting that Parliament might be more usefully employed, that there were matters of more immediate moment to engage their attention, that a commercial treaty with France had just been concluded, and that it was of a vast and comprehensive nature, and of itself sufficient to engross their attention.

"To all this he would oppose these questions:

"Was Parliament misspending its time by inquiring into the oppressions practised on millions of unfortunate persons in India, and endeavouring to bring the daring delinquent who had been guilty of the most flagrant acts of enormous tyranny and rapacious peculation to exemplary and condign punishment? Was it a misuse of

their functions to be diligent in attempting by the most effectual means to wipe off the disgrace affixed to the British name in India, and to rescue the national character from lasting infamy? Surely no man who felt for one or the other would think a business of greater moment or magnitude could occupy his attention; or that the House could with too much steadiness, too ardent a zeal, or too industrious a perseverance, pursue its object.

"Their conduct in this respect during the course of the preceding year had done them immortal honour, and proved to all the world that however degenerate an example of Englishmen *some* of the British subjects had exhibited in India, the people of England, collectively speaking, and acting by their representatives, felt—as men should feel on such an occasion—that they were anxious to do justice by redressing injuries and punishing offenders, however high their rank, however elevated their station.

"Their indefatigable exertions in committees appointed to inquire concerning the affairs of India; their numerous elaborate and clear reports; their long and interesting debates; their solemn addresses to the throne; their rigorous legislative acts; their marked detestation of that novel and base sophism in the principles of judicial inquiry

(constantly the language of the Governor-General's servile dependents), that crimes might be compounded, that the guilt of Mr. Hastings was to be balanced by his successes, that fortunate events were a full and complete set-off against a base system of oppression, corruption, breach of faith, peculation, and treachery; and finally their solemn and awful judgment that, in the case of Benares, Mr. Hastings' conduct was a proper object of parliamentary impeachment, had covered them with applause, and brought them forward in the face of all the world as the objects of perpetual admiration.

"Not less unquestionably just than highly virtuous, was the assertion of the Commons of Great Britain, that there were acts which no political necessity could warrant; and that amidst flagrances of such an inexpiable description was the treatment of Cheit-Sing. To use the well-founded and emphatic language of a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt), the committee had discovered in the administration of Mr. Hastings proceedings of strong injustice, of grinding oppression, and unprovoked severity. In this decision, the committee had also vindicated the character of his right hon. friend (Mr. Burke) from the slanderous tongue of ignorance and perversion. They had by this vote on the ques-

tion declared that the man who brought the charges was no false accuser, that he was not moved by envy, by malice, nor by any unworthy motives to blacken a spotless name; but that he was the indefatigable, persevering, and at length successful, champion of oppressed multitudes against their tyrannical oppressor.

"With sound justice, with manly firmness, with unshaken integrity, had his right hon. friend upon all occasions resisted the timid policy of mere remedial acts; even the high opinion of Mr. Hastings' successor, even the admitted worth of Lord Cornwallis' character, had been deemed by his right hon. friend an inadequate atonement to India for the wrongs so heavily inflicted upon that devoted country.

"Animated with the same zeal, the committee had by that memorable vote given a solemn pledge of their further intentions. They had said to India, 'You shall no longer be reduced into temporary acquiescence by sending out a titled governor or a set of vapouring resolutions; it is not with stars and ribbands, and with all the badges of regal favour, that we atone to you for past delinquencies. No; you shall have the solid consolation of seeing an end to your grievances by an example of punishment for those that have already taken place.'

"The House had set up a beacon which, while it served to guide their own way, would also make their motions conspicuous to the world which surrounded and beheld them. He had no doubt but in their manly determination they would go through the whole of the business with the same steadiness which gave such sterling brilliance of character to their outset. They might challenge the world to observe and judge of them by the result.

"Impossible was it for such men to become improperly influenced by a paper bearing the signature of 'Warren Hastings,' and put not many minutes before into their hands, as well as his own, on their entrance into the House. This insidious paper he felt himself at liberty to consider as a second defence and a second answer to the charge he was about to bring forward—a charge replete with proof of criminality of the blackest dye, of tyranny the most vile and premeditated, of corruption the most open and shameless, of oppression the most severe and grinding, of cruelty the most unmanly and unparalleled. But he was far from meaning to rest the charge on assertion, or on any warm expressions which the impulse of wounded feelings might produce. He would establish every part of the charge by the most unanswerable proof,

and the most unquestionable evidence; and the witness he would bring forth to support every fact he would state should be, for the most part, one whom no man would venture to contradict, Warren Hastings himself; yet this character had friends, nor were they blameable. They might believe him guiltless because he asserted his integrity. Even the partial warmth of friendship, and the emotions of a good, admiring, and unsuspecting heart, might not only carry them to such lengths, but incite them to rise with an intrepid confidence in his vindication. Again would he repeat that the vote of the last session, wherein the conduct of this pillar of India, this cornerstone of our strength in the East, this talisman of the British territories in Asia, was censured, did the greatest honour to this House, as it must be the forerunner of speedy justice on *that* character, which was said to be above censure, and whose conduct we were given to understand was not within the reach even of suspicion, but whose deeds were indeed such as no difficulties, no necessity could justify; for where is the situation, however elevated, and in that elevation however embarrassed, that can authorize the wilful commission of oppression and rapacity? If, at any period, a point arose on which inquiry had been full, deliberate, and dispassionate, it was the

present. There were questions on which party conviction was supposed to be a matter of easy acquisition; and if this inquiry were to be considered merely as a matter of party, he should regard it as very trifling indeed; but he professed to God that he felt in his own bosom the strongest personal conviction, and he was sensible that many other gentlemen did the same. It was on that conviction that he believed the conduct of Mr. Hastings, in regard to the Nabob of Oude and the begums, comprehended every species of human offence. He had proved himself guilty of rapacity at once violent and insatiable, of treachery cool and premeditated, of oppression useless and unprovoked, of breach of faith unwarrantable and base, of cruelty unmanly and unmerciful. These were the crimes of which, in his soul and conscience, he arraigned Warren Hastings, and of which he had the confidence to say he should convict him. As there were gentlemen ready to stand up his advocates, he challenged them to watch if he advanced one inch of assertion for which he had not solid ground; for he trusted nothing to declamation. He desired credit for no fact which he did not prove, and which he did not indeed demonstrate beyond the possibility of refutation. He should not desert the clear and invincible ground of truth through-

out any one particle of his allegations against Mr. Hastings, who uniformly aimed to govern India by his own arbitrary power, covering with misery upon misery a wretched people whom Providence had subjected to the dominion of this country; while, in the defence of Mr. Hastings, not one single circumstance grounded upon truth was stated. He would repeat the words, and gentlemen might take them down. The attempt at vindication was false throughout.

Mr. Sheridan, now pursuing the examination of Mr. Hastings' defence, observed "that there could not exist a single plea for maintaining that that defence against the particular charge now before the committee was hasty; Mr. Hastings had had sufficient time to make it up; and the committee saw that he thought fit to go back as far as the year 1775, for pretended ground of justification from the charge of violence and rapacity." Mr. Sheridan here read a variety of extracts from the defence, which stated the various steps taken by Mr. Bristow in 1775 and 1776, to procure from the begums aid to the nabob. "Not one of these facts, as stated by Mr. Hastings, were true; groundless, nugatory, and insulting were the affirmations of Mr. Hastings, that the seizure of treasures from the begums, and the exposition of their pilfered goods to

public auction (unparalleled acts of open injustice, oppression, and inhumanity!), were in any degree to be defended by those encroachments on their property which had taken place previous to his administration, or by those sales which they themselves had solicited as a favourable mode of supplying a part of their aid to the nabob. The relation of a series of plain, indisputable facts would irrevocably overthrow a subterfuge so pitiful, a distinction so ridiculous. It must be remembered, that at that period, the begums did not merely desire, but they most expressly stipulated, that of the thirty lacs promised, eleven should be paid in sundry articles of manufacture. Was it not obvious, therefore, that the sale of goods, in the first place, far from partaking of the nature of an act of plunder, became an extension of relief, of indulgence, and of accommodation? But, however, he would not be content, like Mr. Hastings, with barely making assertions, or when made against his statement, with barely denying them; on the contrary, whenever he objected to a single statement, he would bring his refutation, and almost in every instance Mr. Hastings himself should be his witness. By the passages which he should beg leave to read, Mr. Hastings wished to insinuate that a claim was set up, in 1775, to the treasure of the begums, as belonging of right

to the nabob." Mr. Sheridan from a variety of documents, chiefly from the minutes of the Supreme Council, of which Mr. Hastings had been the president, explained the true state of that question. "Treasure, which was the source of all cruelties, was the original pretence which Mr. Hastings had made to the Company for the proceeding, and through the whole of his conduct he had alleged the principles of Mahometanism in mitigation of the severities he had sanctioned; as if he meant to insinuate that there was something in Mahometanism which rendered it impious in a son not to plunder his mother." But to show how the case precisely stood, when Mr. Hastings began the attacks, Mr. Sheridan read the minutes of General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis, who severally spoke of a claim which had been made by the nabob on the Bhow begum, in 1775, amounting to two and a half lacs. "The opinion contained in those minutes was, that women were, on the death of their husbands, entitled by the Mahometan law only to the property within the zenana where they lived. This opinion was decisive; Mr. Bristow used no threats; no military execution or rigour was even menaced; the begums complied with the requisitions then made, and the disputed property then claimed was given up. After this, the further treasure,

namely, that which was within the zenana, was confessedly her own; no fresh right was set up; no pretence was made of any kind to the residue; nay, a treaty was signed by the nabob, and ratified by the resident, Mr. Bristow, that, on her paying thirty lacs, she should be freed from all further application, and the Company were bound by Mr. Bristow to this treaty. Here, then, was the issue: after this treaty thus ratified, could there be an argument as to the right of the treasure of the begums? And if the Mahomedan law had ever given a right, was not that right then concluded?" To prove, however, the reliance which the princesses of Oude had entertained, even in 1775, of receiving protection and support from the British Government—an expectation so fatally disappointed in later times, Mr. Sheridan read an extract of a letter from the begum, the mother of the nabob, to Mr. Hastings, received at Calcutta, December 22nd, 1775, wherein she says, 'If it is your pleasure that the mother of the late nabob, myself, and his other women and infant children, should be reduced to a state of dishonour and distress, we must submit; but if, on the contrary, you call to mind the friendship of the late blessed nabob, you will exert yourself effectually in favour of us who are helpless.' And again, 'If you do not approve of my re-

maining at Fyzabad, send a person here in your name, to remove the mother of the late nabob, myself, and about two thousand other women and children, that we may reside with honour and reputation in some other place.'

Mr. Sheridan, in a regular progression of evidence, proceeded to state the successive periods, and finally to bring down the immediate subject in question to the day on which Mr. Hastings embraced the project of plundering the begums; and to justify which he had exhibited in his defence four charges against them, as the grounds and motives of his own conduct: "1. That they had given disturbance at all times to the government of the nabob, and that they had long manifested a spirit hostile to his and to the English Government. 2. That they excited the zemindars to revolt at the time of the insurrection at Benares and of the resumption of the jaghires. 3. That they resisted by armed force the resumption of their own jaghires; and, 4. That they excited and were accessory to the insurrection at Benares." To each of these charges Mr. Sheridan gave distinct and separate answers. "First, on the subject of the imputed disturbances, which they were falsely said to have occasioned, he could produce a variety of extracts, many of them written by Mr. Hastings himself, to prove that, on the con-

trary, they had particularly distinguished themselves by their friendship for the English, and the various good offices which they had rendered the Government. Mr. Hastings left Calcutta in 1781, and proceeded to Lucknow, as he said himself, with two great objects in his mind, namely, Benares and 'Oude. What was the nature of these boasted resources? That he should plunder one or both; the equitable alternative of a highwayman, who in going forth in the evening hesitates which of his resources to prefer, Bagshot or Hounslow. In such a state of generous irresolution did Mr. Hastings proceed to Benares and Oude. At Benares he failed in his pecuniary object. Then, and not till then—not on account of any ancient enmities shown by the begums—not in resentment for any old disturbances, but because he had failed in one place, and had but two in his prospect, did he conceive the base expedient of plundering these aged women. He had no pretence—he had no excuse—he had nothing but the arrogant and obstinate determination to govern India by his own corrupt will to plead for his conduct. Inflamed by disappointment in his first project, he hastened to the fortress of Chunar, to meditate the more atrocious design of instigating a son against his mother, of sacrificing female dignity and distress to parricide

and plunder. At Chunar was that infamous treaty concerted with the nabob vizier to despoil the princesses of Oude of their hereditary possessions. There it was that Mr. Hastings had stipulated with one whom he called an independent prince, 'that, as great distress has arisen to the nabob's government from the military power and dominion assumed by the jaghiredars, he be permitted to resume such as he may find necessary; with a reserve that all such for the amount of whose jaghires the Company are guarantees shall, in case of the resumptions of their lands, be paid the amount of their net collections, through the resident, in ready money; and that no English resident be appointed to Furruckabad.'

"No sooner was this foundation of iniquity thus instantly established, in violation of the pledged faith and solemn guarantee of the British Government; no sooner had Mr. Hastings determined to invade the substance of justice, than he resolved to avail himself of her judicial forms, and accordingly despatched a messenger for the Chief Justice of India, to assist him in perpetrating the violations he had projected. Sir Elijah Impey being arrived, Mr. Hastings with much art proposed a question of opinion, involving an unsubstantiated fact, in order to obtain a surreptitious approbation of the measure he had

predetermined to adopt: 'The begums being in open revolt, might not the nabob confiscate their property?' 'Most undoubtedly,' was the ready answer of the friendly judge. Not a syllable of inquiry intervened as to the existence of the imputed rebellion, nor a moment's pause as to the ill purposes to which the decision of a chief justice might be perverted. It was not the office of a friend to mix the grave caution and cold circumspection of a judge with an opinion taken in such circumstances; and Sir Elijah had previously declared that he gave his advice not as a judge, but as a friend, a character he equally preferred in the strange office which he undertook of collecting defensive affidavits on the subject of Benares." Mr. Sheridan said, "it was curious to reflect on the whole of Sir Elijah's circuit at that perilous time. Sir Elijah had stated his desire of relaxing from the fatigues of office, and unbending his mind in a party of health and pleasure: yet wisely apprehending that very sudden relaxation might defeat its object, he had contrived to mix some objects of business, to be interspersed with his amusement. He had, therefore, in his little airing of 900 miles, great part of which he went post, escorted by an army, selected those very situations where insurrection subsisted, and rebellion

threatened; and had not only delivered his deep and curious researches in the laws and rights of nations, and of treaties, in the capacity of the oriental Grotius, whom Warren Hastings was to study, but likewise in the humbler and more practical situation of a collector of *ex parte* evidence. In the former quality his opinion was the premature sanction for plundering the begums; in the latter character he became the posthumous supporter of the expulsion and pillage of the Rajah Cheit Sing. Acting on an unproved fact, on a position as ideal as a datum of the Duke of Richmond's fabrication, he had not hesitated, in the first instance, to lend his authority as a licence for unlimited persecution. In the latter, he did not disdain to scud about India like an itinerant informer, with a pedlar's pack of garbled evidence and surreptitious affidavits. What a pure friendship, what a voucher of unequivocal attachment, from a British judge to such a character as Warren Hastings! With a generous oblivion of duty and honour,—with a proud sense of having authorised all future rapacity, and sanctioned all past oppression, this friendly judge proceeded on his circuit of health and ease; and while the Governor-General, sanctioned by this solemn opinion, issued his orders to plunder the begums of their treasure, Sir

Elijah pursued his progress, and passing through a wide region of distress and misery, explored a country that presented a speaking picture of hunger and of nakedness, in quest of objects best suited to his feelings, in anxious search of calamities most kindred to his invalid imagination. Thus, while the executive power in India was perverted to the most disgraceful inhumanities, the judicial authority also became its close and confidential associate—at the same moment that the sword of government was turned to an assassin's dagger, the pure ermine of justice was stained and soiled with the basest and meanest contamination.

"Under such circumstances did Mr. Hastings complete the treaty of Chunar—a treaty which might challenge all the treaties that ever subsisted, for containing in the smallest compass the most extensive treachery. Mr. Hastings did not conclude that treaty till he had received from the nabob a present, or rather a bribe, of £100,000. The circumstances of this present were as extraordinary as the thing itself. Four months afterwards, and not till then, Mr. Hastings communicated the matter to the Company. Unfortunately for himself, however, this tardy disclosure was conveyed in words which betray his original meaning; for, with no common

incaution, he admits the present 'was of a magnitude not to be concealed.'"

Mr. Sheridan stated all the circumstances of this bribe, and averred that the whole had its rise in a principle of rank corruption. "For what was the consideration for this extraordinary bribe? No less than the withdrawing from Oude, not only of all the English gentlemen in official situations, but the whole of the English army; and that, too, at the very moment when he himself had stated the whole country of Oude to be in open revolt and rebellion. Other very strange articles were contained in the same treaty, which nothing but this infamous bribe could have occasioned, together with the reverse which he had in his own mind of treachery to the nabob; for the only part of the treaty which he ever attempted to carry into execution was to withdraw the English gentlemen from Oude. The nabob, indeed, considered this as essential to his deliverance, and his observation on the circumstance was curious—'For though Major Palmer,' said he, 'has not yet asked anything, I observe it is the custom of the English gentlemen constantly to ask for something from me before they go.' This imputation on the English Mr. Hastings was most ready to countenance as a screen for his own abandoned profligacy; and,

therefore, at the very moment that he pocketed the extorted spoils of the nabob, with his usual grave hypocrisy and cant, 'Go,' he said to the English gentlemen, 'go, you oppressive rascals, go from this worthy unhappy man whom you have plundered, and leave him to my protection. You have robbed him, you have plundered him, you have taken advantage of his accumulated distresses; but, please God, he shall in future be at rest, for I have promised him he shall never see the face of an Englishman again.' This, however, was the only part of the treaty which he even affected to fulfil; and, in all its other parts, we learn from himself, that at the very moment he made it, he intended to deceive the nabob; and, accordingly, he advised general instead of partial resumption, for the express purpose of defeating the first views of the nabob, and, instead of giving instant and unqualified assent to all the articles of the treaty, he perpetually qualified, explained, and varied them with new diminutions and reservations.

"Sir, I call upon gentlemen to say if there is any theory in Machiavel, any treachery upon record, can equal this monstrous iniquity, if they had ever heard of any cold Italian fraud which could in any degree be put in comparison with the disgusting hypocrisy and unequalled base-

ness which Mr. Hastings had shown on that occasion."

After having stated this complicated infamy in terms of the severest reprehension, Mr. Sheridan proceeded to observe, "that he recollected to have heard it advanced by some of those admirers of Mr. Hastings, who were not so implicit as to give unqualified applause to his crimes; that they found an apology for the atrocity of them in the greatness of his mind. To estimate the solidity of such a defence, it would be sufficient merely to consider in what consisted this prepossessing distinction, this captivating characteristic of greatness of mind! Is it not solely to be traced in great actions directed to great ends? In them, and them alone, we are to search for true magnanimity; to them only can we justly affix the splendid title and honours of real greatness. There was, indeed, another species of greatness, which displayed itself in boldly conceiving a bad measure, and undauntedly pursuing it to its accomplishment. But had Mr. Hastings the merit of exhibiting either of these descriptions of greatness, even of the latter? He saw nothing great, nothing magnanimous, nothing open, nothing direct in his measures, or in his mind. On the contrary, he had too often pursued the worst objects by the worst means. His course was an

eternal deviation from rectitude. He either tyrannized or deceived, and was by turns a Dionysius and a Scapin. As well might the writhing obliquity of the serpent be compared to the swift directness of the arrow, as the duplicity of Mr. Hastings' ambition to the simple steadiness of true magnanimity. In his mind all was shuffling, ambiguous, dark, insidious, and little; nothing simple, nothing unmixed, all affected plainness, and actual dissimulation. A heterogeneous mass of contradictory qualities; with nothing great but his crimes; and even those contrasted by the littleness of his motives, which at once denoted both his baseness and his meanness, and marked him for a traitor and a trickster: nay, in his style and writing, there was the same mixture of vicious contrarieties. The most grovelling ideas he conveyed in the most inflated language, giving mock consequence to low cavils, and uttering quibbles in heroics; so that his compositions disgusted the mind's taste as much as his actions excited the soul's abhorrence. Indeed, this mixture of character seemed by some an unaccountable, but inherent quality, to be appropriated, though in inferior degrees, to everything that concerned his employers. He remembered to have heard an hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) remark, that there was something in the first

frame and constitution of the Company, which extended the sordid principles of their origin over all their successive operations, connecting with their civil policy, and even with their boldest achievements, the meanness of a pedlar and the profligacy of pirates. Alike in the political and military line could be observed auctioneering ambassadors and trading generals: and thus we saw a revolution brought about by affidavits! an army employed in executing an arrest! a town besieged on a note of hand! a prince dethroned for the balance of an account! Thus it was they exhibited a government, which united the mock majesty of a bloody sceptre and the little traffic of a merchant's counting-house—wielding a truncheon with one hand, and picking a pocket with the other."

Mr. Sheridan now went into a long statement to show the various irrefragable proofs, exhibited in the minutes of the Bengal Council, of the falsity of the charge that the begums were the ancient disturbers of the government; and equally to prove that the second charge also, namely, that the begums had incited the jaghiredars to resist the nabob, was no less untrue, it being substantiated in evidence that not one of the jaghiredars did resist. "Sir, I maintain that it was incontrovertible that the begums were not concerned,

either in the rebellion of Bulbudder, or the insurrection at Benares; nor did Mr. Hastings ever once seriously believe them guilty. Their treasures were their treasons, and Asoph-ul-Dowlah thought like an unwise prince when he blamed his father for leaving him so little wealth. But his father, Sujah-ul-Dowlah, acted wisely in leaving his son with no temptation about him, to invite acts of violence from the rapacious. He clothed him with poverty as with a shield, and armed him with necessity as with a sword. The third charge was equally false. Did they resist the resumption of their own jaghiredars? Though if they had resisted, he contended there would have been no crime, for those jaghires were by solemn treaty confirmed to them; but, on the contrary, there was not one syllable of charge against them. The nabob himself, with all the load of obloquy which he incurred, never imputed to them the crime of stirring up an opposition to his authority. To prove the falsehood of the whole of this charge, and to show that Mr. Hastings originally projected the plunder, that he threw the odium in the first instance on the nabob, that he imputed the crimes to them before he had received one of the rumours which he afterwards manufactured into affidavits,"—Mr. Sheridan recommended a particular attention to

dates; and he deduced from the papers these facts:—"that the first idea was started by Mr. Hastings on the 15th Nov. 1781; that Mr. Middleton communicated it to the nabob, and procured from him a formal proposition on the 2nd Dec.; that on the 1st Dec. Mr. Hastings wrote a letter to Mr. Middleton confirming the first suggestion made through Sir Elijah, which letter came into the hands of Mr. Middleton on the 6th Dec. He stated all the circumstances of the pains taken by Mr. Middleton to bring the nabob at length to issue the perwaunas, and coupled this with the extraordinary minute written by Mr. Hastings on his return to Calcutta, where he stated the resistance of the begums to the execution of the resumption on the 7th Jan., 1782, as the cause of the measure of 1781. He then proceeded to prove that the begums were, by their condition, their age, and their infirmities, almost the only two souls in India who could not have a thought of distressing that government, by which alone they could hope to be protected; and that to charge them with a design to depose their nearest and dearest relation, was equally absurd. He did not endeavour to do this from any idea, that because there was no motive for the offences imputed to these women, it was, therefore, a necessary consequence that such im-

putations were false. He was not to learn that there was such a crime as wanton, unprovoked wickedness. Those who entertain doubts on this point need only give themselves the trouble of reading the administration of Mr. Hastings. But, as to the immediate case, the documents on the table would bear incontrovertible testimony that insurrection had constantly taken place in Oude. To ascribe it to the begums was wandering even beyond the improbabilities of fiction. It were not less absurd to affirm that famine would not have pinched, nor thirst have parched, nor extermination have depopulated, but for the interference of these old women. To use a strong expression of Mr. Hastings on another occasion: 'The good which those women did was certain, the ill was precarious.' But Mr. Hastings had found it more suitable to his purpose to reverse the proposition; yet wanting a motive for his rapacity, he could find it only in fiction. The simple fact was, their treasure was their treason. But 'they complained of the injustice.' God of heaven! had they not a right to complain? After a solemn treaty violated, plundered of all their property, and on the eve of the extremity of wretchedness, were they to be deprived of the last resource of impotent wretchedness—complaint and lamentation? Was it a crime that

they should crowd together in fluttering trepidation like a flock of resistless birds on seeing the felon kite, who, having darted at one devoted bird and missed his aim, singled out a new object, and was springing on his prey, with redoubled vigour on his wing, and keener vengeance in his eye? The fact with Mr. Hastings was precisely this: having failed in the case of Cheit Sing, he saw his fate; he felt the necessity of procuring a sum of money somewhere, for he knew *that* to be the never-failing receipt to make his peace with the directors at home. Such were the true motives of the horrid excesses perpetrated against the begums—excesses, in every part of the description of which, he felt himself accompanied by the vigorous support of most unanswerable evidence; and upon this test would he place his whole cause; let gentlemen lay their hands upon their hearts, and with truth issuing in all its purity from their lips, solemnly declare whether they were or were not convinced that the real spring of the conduct of Mr. Hastings, far from being a desire to crush a rebellion, an ideal, fabulous rebellion, was a rapacious determination to seize, with lawless hands, upon the treasures of devoted, miserable, yet unoffending victims."

Mr. Sheridan now adverted to the affidavit

made by Mr. Middleton; and after stating how futile were the grounds upon which he had, to the satisfaction of his conscience, proceeded to the utmost extremity of violence against the begums, he exclaimed, "The God of justice forbid that any man in this House should make up his mind to accuse Mr. Hastings upon the ground which Mr. Middleton took for condemning the begums, or to pass a verdict of guilty for the most trivial misdemeanour against the poorest wretch that ever had existed!" He then animadverted on the affidavits of Colonel Hanway, Colonel Gordon, Major M'Donald, Major Williams, and others. "Major Williams, among the strange reports that chiefly filled these affidavits, stated one that he had heard, viz., that fifty British troops, watching two hundred prisoners, had been surrounded by six thousand of the enemy, and relieved by the approach of nine men! And of such extraordinary hearsay evidence were most of the depositions composed. Considering, therefore, the character given by Mr. Hastings to the British army in Oude, 'that they manifested a rage of rapacity and peculation,' it was extraordinary that there were no instances of stouter swearing. But as for Colonel Gordon, he afforded a flagrantly conspicuous proof of the grateful spirit and temper of affidavits designed to plunge these

wretched women in irretrievable ruin. Colonel Gordon was, just before, not merely released from danger, but preserved from imminent death, by the very person whose accuser he thought fit to become; and yet, incredible as it may appear, even at the expiration of two little days from his deliverance, he deposes against the distressed and unfortunate woman who had become his saviour, and only upon hearsay evidence accuses her of crimes and rebellion. "Great God of justice!" exclaimed Mr. Sheridan, "canst Thou from Thy eternal throne look down upon such premeditated turpitude of heart, and not fix some mark of dreadful vengeance upon the perpetrators?" Of Mr. M'Donald, he said, "that he liked not the memory which remembered things better at the end of five years than at the time, unless there might be something so relaxing in the climate of India, and so affecting the memory as well as the nerves, 'the soft figures melting away,' and the images of immediate action instantaneously dissolving: men must return to their native air of England, to brace up the mind as well as the body, and have their memories, like their sinews, restrung.

"Having painted the loose quality of the affidavits," he said that "he must pause a moment, and particularly address himself to one descrip-

tion of gentlemen—those of the learned profession—within those walls. They saw that that House was the path to fortune in their profession—that they might soon expect that some of them were to be called to a dignified situation, where the great and important trust would be reposed in them of protecting the lives and fortunes of their fellow-subjects. One learned gentleman, in particular (Sir Lloyd Kenyon), if rumour spoke right, might suddenly be called to succeed that great and venerable character who long had shone the brightest luminary of his profession, whose pure and steady light was clear even to its latest moment, but whose last beam must now too soon be extinguished. He would ask the supposed successor of Lord Mansfield calmly to reflect on these extraordinary depositions, and solemnly to declare whether the mass of affidavits taken at Lucknow would be received by him as evidence to convict the lowest subject in this country? If he said it would, he declared to God he would sit down, and not add a syllable more to the too long trespass he had made on the patience of the Committee."

Mr. Sheridan went farther into the exposure of the evidence, into the comparison of dates, and the subsequent circumstances, in order to prove that all the enormous consequences which fol-

lowed from the resumption, in the captivity of the women, and the imprisonment and cruelties practised on their people, were solely to be imputed to Mr. Hastings. After stating the miseries which the women suffered, he said "that Mr. Hastings had once remarked that a mind touched with superstition might have contemplated the fate of the Rohillas with peculiar impressions. But if, indeed, the mind of Mr. Hastings could yield to superstitious imagination—if his fancy could suffer any disturbance, and even in vision image forth the proud spirit of Sujah Dowlah looking down upon the ruin and devastation of his family, and beholding that palace which Mr. Hastings had first wrested from his hand, and afterwards restored, plundered by that very army with which he himself had vanquished the Mahrattas; seizing on the very plunder which he had ravaged from the Rohillas; that Middleton who had been engaged in managing the previous violations most busy to perpetrate the last; that very Hastings whom, on his death-bed, he had left the guardian of his wife, and mother, and family, turning all those dear relations, the objects of his solemn trust, forth to the merciless seasons and to a more merciless soldiery;—a mind touched with superstition must, indeed, have

cherished such a contemplation with peculiar impressions. That Mr. Hastings was regularly acquainted with all the enormities committed on the begums there was the clearest proof. It was true that Middleton was rebuked for not being more exact. He did not, perhaps, descend to the detail; he did not give him an account of the number of groans which were heaved, of the quantity of tears which were shed, of the weight of the fetters, or of the depth of the dungeons; but he communicated every step which he took to accomplish the base and unwarrantable end. He told him that to save appearances they must use the name of the nabob, and that they need go no farther than was absolutely necessary; this he might venture to say, without being suspected by Mr. Hastings of too severe a morality. The Governor-General also endeavoured to throw a share of the guilt on the Council, although Mr. Wheeler had never taken any share, and Mr. Macpherson had not arrived in India when the scene began. After contending that he had shrunk from the inquiry ordered by the Court of Directors, under a new and pompous doctrine, that the majesty of justice was to be approached by supplication, and was not to degrade itself by hunting for crimes, forgetting the infamous employment to which he had appointed an English

chief justice — to hunt for criminal charges against innocent, defenceless women," Mr. Sheridan said "he trusted that the House would vindicate the insulted character of justice; that they would demonstrate its true quality, essence, and purposes—that they would prove it to be, in the case of Mr. Hastings, active, inquisitive, and avenging."

Mr. Sheridan remarked that "he had heard of factions and parties in that House, and knew they existed. There was scarcely a subject upon which they were not broken and divided into sects. The prerogative of the Crown found its advocates among the representatives of the people. The privileges of the people found opponents even in the House of Commons itself. Habits, connexions, parties, all led to diversity of opinion. But when inhumanity presented itself to their observation, it found no division among them; they attacked it as their common enemy, and, as if the character of this land was involved in their zeal for its ruin, they left it not till it was completely overthrown. It was not given to that House to behold the objects of their compassion and benevolence in the present extensive consideration, as it was to the officers who relieved and who so feelingly describe the ecstatic

emotions of gratitude in the instant of deliverance; they could not behold the workings of the hearts, the quivering lips, the trickling tears, the loud and yet tremulous joy of the millions whom their vote of this night would for ever save from the cruelty of corrupted power; but, though they could not directly see the effect, was not the true enjoyment of their benevolence increased by the blessing being conferred unseen? Would not the omnipotence of Britain be demonstrated to the wonder of nations, by stretching its mighty arm across the deep, and saving by its fiat distant millions from destruction? And would the blessings of the people thus saved dissipate in empty air? No! If I may dare (said Mr. Sheridan) to use the figure, we shall constitute Heaven itself our proxy, to receive for us the blessings of their pious gratitude and the prayers of their thanksgiving. It is with confidence, therefore, sir, that I move you on this charge—'that Warren Hastings, Esq., be impeached.'"

On the conclusion of Mr. Sheridan's speech, he sat down; the whole House, the members, peers, and strangers involuntarily joined in a tumult of applause, and adopted a mode of ex-

pressing their approbation, new and irregular in that House, by loudly and repeatedly clapping with their hands.

Of this extraordinary and unexampled effort of surpassing eloquence, electrifying its auditors, and, like an overwhelming torrent, bearing down all before it, we have, unhappily, but an imperfect report. The one which we have introduced into our preceding pages is the most perfect of this surprising effort of his genius and ability.

Mr. BURKE declared it "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition."

Mr. Fox said, "All that he had ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it dwindled into nothing and vanished like vapour before the sun."

Mr. PITT, who was by no means disposed to flatter an opponent he had so frequently encountered in debate, and on several occasions suffered under the severity of his sarcasms, acknowledged "that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind."

Sir WILLIAM DOLBEN moved an adjournment of the debate, confessing that, "In the state of mind in which Mr. Sheridan's speech had left

him, it was impossible for him to give a determinate opinion.

Mr. STANHOPE seconded the motion, declaring that when he entered the House "he was not ashamed to acknowledge that his opinion inclined to Mr. Hastings, but such had been the wonderful efficacy of Mr. Sheridan's convincing detail of facts and irresistible eloquence, that he could not but say that his sentiments were materially changed. Nothing, indeed, but information almost equal to a miracle could induce him not to vote for the charge; but he had just felt the influence of such a miracle, and he could not but ardently desire to avoid an immediate decision."

Mr. MONTAGUE, under similar influences, followed on the same side.

Several members, strongly predisposed in favour of Mr. Hastings, confessed to an entire revolution in their sentiments; others declared that though they could not resist the conviction that flashed upon their minds, yet they wished to have time to cool down before they were called upon to vote, and though they were persuaded it would require another miracle to produce another change in their opinions, yet for the sake of decorum they thought it proper that the debate should be adjourned.

Mr. LOGAN, the author of a most masterly

defence of Mr. Hastings, went to the House of Commons prejudiced in the highest degree in favour of the accused and against the accuser. At the expiration of the first hour he said to a friend, "All this is declamatory assertion without proof;" when the second was finished, "This is a most wonderful oration;" at the close of a third, "Mr. Hastings has acted most unjustifiably;" the fourth, "Mr. Hastings is a most atrocious criminal;" and at last, "Of all monsters of iniquity the most enormous is Warren Hastings."

Such was the testimony borne to the astounding eloquence of Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

It is deeply, deeply to be lamented that this matchless display of eloquence has not been preserved in its entirety; that among the papers of the great orator, examined on his decease, nothing has been found to aid or assist in its completion. It is to be lamented, but it is a broad fact in refutation of the doctrine of Thomas Moore, that whatever he did was the product of much labour; also that Mrs. Sheridan, aided by her sister, Mrs. Tickel, had assisted largely in its production —that they had been employed for several days and nights in arranging its materials, and hence might be fairly entitled to share in the triumph of their joint labours. We are unable to fathom out the

least trace of authority upon which Mr. Moore could base this meagre assertion, while we are unwilling to attribute unworthy motives to a seemingly reluctant pen—reluctant in commendation, and so "damning with faint praise." The papers, and all that remained of Sheridan in his manuscripts and correspondence, were submitted to Mr. Moore with the discretionary power of using them as he pleased in building up the fabric of his memoir, and of perfecting the portrait he had undertaken to draw. Now, among these papers nothing could be found to justify his assertions, and no doubt can be entertained but that he would have readily availed himself of any evidence however distantly connected with the matter under speculation; and what other authority he had or could have we are at a loss to account for. He had none. If Mrs. Sheridan had had any materials on which she could, with her husband's assistance, have wrought out the Begum speech, she would have done so, in the ardency of her attachment for his fame, and the pressing applications of his numerous friends and admirers: nor can it be supposed that among his papers on his decease no vestige should be left of those incessant labours which had produced the crowning period of his public life. The subject had been well studied, the skeleton made

out, the points for discussion fully arranged, but the filling up was reserved for the exhibition of that impassioned eloquence, bursting forth with the thought, and glowing with the enthusiasm, which could submit itself to no training or the governance of any settled guide. We know of our own knowledge that Mrs. Sheridan herself was astonished no less than his auditors at the brilliant display of his unequalled powers, and that to her ear it came in the freshness of its vigour and the newness of its spontaneous thought.

Borne away on the torrent of his eloquence, Sheridan could never collect together those burning thoughts which like the lightning's flash had passed away, leaving alone the memory of their terrific grandeur.

CHAPTER V.

THE KING—DEBATES ON THE REGENCY—RECOVERY—REVOLUTION IN FRANCE—DISAFFECTION AT HOME—PULLING DOWN OLD DRURY—DEATH EXTRAORDINARY—SCHEME FOR REBUILDING—EMBARRASSMENTS.

THE deep interest which Sheridan had taken in the embarrassed situation of the affairs of the Prince of Wales, and the certainty of his having the private ear of that distinguished personage, being accepted as his confidential friend and adviser, placed him in an unfavourable position with the Court, as also being a participator in those irregularities with which his Royal Highness stood charged, by which he incurred the censure of the King, and consequently the hostile jealousy of the ministers of the Crown. His known social qualities encouraged the suspicion, and it would be fallacious to contend against the received impression that he was a large participator in his Royal Highness' pleasurable amusements. But opinion had done injustice to both in its harsh expression; it is indisputable that in their private matters they did not confine them-

selves within the bounds limited to discretion; the buoyancy of youth on the one hand, and of a seniority of age, but slightly advanced in the moral maturity of thought and action on the other, may be fairly interposed in extenuation of some of those extravagances and erratic courses, springing more from the head than the heart, and in which the animal was permitted to predominate over the mental man. We have known instances of the highest moral and benignant feeling on the part of the Prince suddenly called into action in the midst of licentiousness by the appeal of the degraded, the fallen, but not hopelessly lost, in the depraved circles into which misery had cast the frail unfortunate. We have known of his benignancy superseding passion, and the noble qualities of an open, generous heart expanding itself to the warmest sympathy, and extending itself to protection and redemption. The woman true to herself was safe in his hands; the frail one who had fallen to temptation never pleaded her sorrow or remorse in vain, or failed in exciting his compassion.

Sheridan was not of the same temperament with regard to his amours, his was the love of social life, the pleasures of the table, the wit which circulated with the glass, the fun, if we may be allowed to use the term, and frolic attend-

ant upon adventure, and that periodical change which emanated from the "Salutation," and we may safely advance the fact that no viciousness of purpose but that of seeing life in its various phases drew them into those corrupt avenues where evil reigned, and where they might glean a knowledge of man in his debasement without partaking of his qualities or participating in the grossness of his sensualities.

The Prince was in debt, heavily in debt, incumbered with difficulties incurred in support of a station as heir-apparent, which his limited income was unequal to; there is no question of the fact. The parsimony of the Sovereign in resisting any increase of income by which those incumbrances might be removed, and the inflexible adherence of the minister (Mr. Pitt) to the royal will, left his Royal Highness without resource or relief, and induced that recklessness in the management of his household affairs, and of prodigal expenditure, which, in after-years, terminated so disastrously.

Sheridan, in the earnestness of his disinterested zeal, advocated the Prince's cause, but with no effect. He was answered by Pitt, who argued on the necessity of economy and retrenchment, although economy and retrenchment were not exhibited in any department of the state, but

limited and confined to argument on the Prince's claim. The poor old King, moderate in everything, domestic in his habits, grieved at the conduct of his elder sons, the Prince of Wales and Duke of York; with a mind not sufficiently strong to meet the endurance of his many troubles, it broke down under his afflictions in the autumn of 1788, and he was announced to the world as wholly incapable of exercising the functions of sovereignty. The whole country heard of his mental malady with grief, consternation, and alarm; the warmest expressions of sympathy were vented for his sorrows and his sufferings; his popularity revived; at no time did he reign more thoroughly in the hearts of his people than at the time when it was feared his reign had terminated. His virtues were descanted on with the truest affection, and the most unbounded loyalty to his person was manifested.

It was the advent of the Pitt ministry; and, whether from principle or policy, is not now to be questioned, they pursued a course fully accordant with the public feeling and the dearest interests of the afflicted monarch.

Both Houses of Parliament were immediately assembled on the question of a regency and the custody of the royal person. Sheridan took an active part in the debates which ensued on those

important questions, strenuously advocating the right of the Prince of Wales to the unrestricted regency, vehemently contending that, as heir-apparent to the crown, which must fall to him by demise, the rightful exercise of its functions was equally his by means of incapacity.

Mr. Pitt as loudly maintained the right of Parliament in settling the terms of a regency, of delegating its powers, and defining those restrictions demanded as of its duty to the Sovereign in the event of his recovery, and securing his restoration to the royal authority.

The country sustained Mr. Pitt in this assumption, yielding to him its entire confidence, thereby firmly seating him in the power, which he wielded with a constancy of purpose and an inflexible adherence to the principles of the constitution in its letter and in its spirit, which no argument, however subtle, could abate, no raillery but confirm. The Prince was represented by the Whigs, and all his letters, messages, and communications to the House were prepared by Sheridan or Burke, while Fox, in contemplation of the regency, was considered as the future minister. Now, no man was more popular than Fox as a leader of opposition, or more unpopular with the reins of government in his hand; his political failure and his improvident coalition administration were fresh

before the eyes of the people, who, anxious for reform, were still substantially loyal. There was unanimity among them on the great and absorbing question touching the rights of the Crown; the want of unanimity was alone found within the walls of the Houses of Parliament. Happily the question, which had been upwards of four months in angry discussion, was suddenly terminated by the recovery of the King, which was announced in both Houses of Parliament on the 19th day of February, 1789, to the great and unbounded joy of the nation. Never were the public rejoicings so great, or the manifestations of loyalty more enthusiastic; every house was illuminated, and the bonfires blazed throughout the realm in every city, town, or hamlet; "God save the King!" was echoed from every alley, lane, or street, from the banqueting halls of the opulent, and roared from the tables of the lowly. It seemed as if the whole country had been relieved by Divine providence from some impending calamity. Prayers of thanksgiving were offered up from the altars of every church of every creed, each vying with the other in the passionate expression of their zeal and their gratitude to God. Addresses of congratulation were pouring in from every quarter, and happy was the man and highly flattered by the occasion who was permitted to affix his mark

for his signature to these voluminous records of a people's rejoicing.

Disunion was no more, or if still in a smothered existence, smouldering in the innermost recesses of the heart, to break forth at a more auspicious period.

Sheridan was not slow in remarking on these the visible signs of the times, and felt in the full assurance that the Whig influence had lost its savour—that it had lost the majesty of its power, and the Pitt administration, while it might be judiciously restrained in the exercise of its authority, was too firmly seated to be cast down by that party to which he openly avowed he belonged.

But this memorable year was full of startling events, and pregnant with those convulsions which ultimately burst forth, involving the whole of Europe in an exterminating war, threatening in every direction the downfall of the ancient monarchies. France, under the dominion of the Bourbons, had risen in revolt against regal authority; the wide spread of Jacobinism, of democracy, which had been disseminated by Lafayette and his returned troops from America, who had fought for liberty, and by its powerful aid wrested the colonies from Great Britain, was aroused like a giant from his slumbers to the rescue of their

own. That government of feudalism, which had existed for so many centuries in its tyranny and oppressions, had, in its exultation of rendering by its aid a people free, and creating a republic in the western world, shown by its impolicy its own weakness; opposed to patriotism, it banded and united a people long oppressed in one common cause, and that cause the rights of man.

The uprising of a people trodden down by a system of oppression, the fall of the Bastile, the discomfiture of the National Guards, and the slaughter which ensued, were but the business of a day long planned and fearfully executed. The news was wafted across the Channel with much of excitement, and serious apprehensions were entertained of its effects at home. That effect, however, was felt in another manner. It was found in ratifying the bond uniting the agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing interests confederated in support of the monarchy; and the intrepid minister Pitt, who, in the perilous storm of a revolution bursting forth with all the vigour and enthusiasm of an exasperated people, inviting the enslaved of Europe to their aid, presenting an aspect of affairs intimidating to the boldest efforts of restraint,—stood firm as a rock, inflexible to its encounters, avoiding, if possible, collision with its elements, and provident in the means

of guarding his own country from its contaminations.

The champion of civil and religious liberty, with the moral qualities of law and order for his guide and government, he acquired unbounded confidence in the inflexible firmness of his character and the profound wisdom of his legislative measures. Nor was this confidence misplaced, as afterwards fully appeared in the events of his extraordinary life and the history of his country.

Sheridan was no monarchist, although an adherent of the Act of Settlement and the principles of the constitution of 1688. He estimated the monarchy under its limitation as the nearest approach to a republic, but he was opposed to an hereditary representative peerage, with its alarming power of electing its *own* representatives in the House of Commons, under the close borough system, as subversive of the constitution itself, against which it was not provided, and the evils of which it never contemplated. He was no mobocrat, and consequently opposed to throwing the government into the arms of the masses. "Universal suffrage," he was used to say, in his sarcastic humour, "is a very good subject to talk on before an election, but a very intricate one to treat of after. The true friend of the people does not desire it."

About this time his private affairs demanded more of his attention than he had afforded hitherto to their consideration. His theatre, the only source from which he derived any revenue, and which was still productive under the able management to which he had assigned it, was pronounced unsafe, too worn to be repaired, and hence the necessity of pulling it down, and replacing it with a more modern structure, and more substantial to the purpose for which it was to be employed.

His visits to the theatre had latterly been unfrequent, and never paid to any other department than the treasury, but it became necessary in the then state of the property to inquire into the means for erecting a new building, upon an enlarged scale, and equal to the demands of the classic drama.

Sheridan's expediency never failed him. Applying himself with some diligence to the design which, in his own words, was to make or mar his fortune, he decided upon issuing proposals for raising a sum of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, by three hundred debentures, of five hundred pounds each, bearing an interest of five per cent. for one hundred years, to be applied in paying off the incumbrances on the property as it stood, and for its re-erection. The value of the property,

the patents, &c., &c., was stated at something like three hundred thousand pounds. The money to be raised was to be appropriated—

£80,000 for the building of the new theatre.
60,000 for clearing off debts and mortgages.
10,000 left for contingent expenses.

£150,000

The scheme was novel at the time, and was very promptly subscribed to. Many delays occurred in the investigation of plans—the settlement of the question—and Sheridan's habitual negligence. At length it was decided on a most magnificent theatre, splendid in architectural design, which was furnished with the estimates by Holland the architect, and approved of. The season 1790-91 was brought to a close on the fourth day of June of the latter year, and the work of demolition commenced.

The journals of the following day announced its close with the comedy of the "Country Girl" and the musical farce of "No Song no Supper." On the fall of the curtain Mr. John Palmer, a favourite comedian, came forward with the following address to the audience:—"Ladies and gentlemen, on the part of the proprietor, manager, and performers, I have to express their gratitude for the unprecedented support with

which you have favoured them during the past season.

"When next we have the honour to appear before you on this spot, we trust it will be in a theatre better calculated for your accommodation, more deserving royal countenance, and the patronage of this great metropolis."

Sheridan, with his usual vivacity and habitual humour, announced this event in the obituary of the public journals:—

"DIED, on Saturday night, of a gradual decay, in the ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH YEAR OF HER AGE, Old Madam Drury, who lived in six reigns and saw many generations pass in review before her. She remembered Betterton in age; lived in intimacy with Wilks, Booth, and Cibber, and knew old Macklin when he was a stripling.

"Her hospitality exceeded that of the English character, even in its earliest days of festivity—having almost through the whole of her life entertained from one to two thousand persons of both sexes six nights out of the seven in the week.

"She was an excellent poetess, could be grave and gay by turns; and yet, sometimes catching the disorder from intrusive guests, she could be dull enough in all conscience. Her memory was excellent; and her singing kept in such a gradual

state of improvement, that it was allowed her voice was better the three or four last years of her life than when she was in her prime.

"The old lady was born in the year 1674; she was on terms of intimacy with the merry monarch, Charles II., who occasionally joined in her revels, and selected a partner from her beauties. And not to touch too heavily on the honour or virtuous character of the old lady, it must be admitted she participated in many of the mad pranks of the lively Rochester; at one time Nell Gwynne was an especial favourite, but she always kept a favourite in her eye; she was not blind, although she could not see through her own medium, since her favourites were selected for her by her numerous visitors, and were only admitted to her evening parties so long as her guests approved of their appearance. She was a very compliant old dame, having a remarkable attachment to her own interests, and was never known violently to oppose her *own* will to that of her numerous friends and admirers. She had a rout of some two thousand people at her house the very night of her death, and the old lady felt herself in such high spirits, that she said she would give them *no supper without a song!*—which was complied with; she then fell gently back in her chair and expired without a groan.

"Dr. Palmer, one of her family physicians, attended her in her last moments, and immediately announced her dissolution to the company."

Up to the tearing down of the old building with which his fortunes were blended, Sheridan's pecuniary embarrassments were but of a light and trifling character, and of an amount which a slight attendance to economy would have easily surmounted; they were in reality no more than what would naturally result from improvident anticipation.

The avidity with which the shares of the new theatre were taken up was in full evidence of the confidence reposed in his honour, his integrity, and his talents.

It was thus, in the full tide of his prosperity, that by concurrent causes he was driven into those shoals and quicksands which human foresight had not forewarned, and which lay beneath the smooth surface of the current on which he had launched all his future fortunes. The facilities, however, with which he had hitherto raised the supplies for his heavy domestic expenditure were no longer open to him with that readiness which in all former times was exhibited to his demands. His theatre was no longer in operation, its treasury was closed, the new building was progressing slowly, checked by the discovery of a dormant patent which had been

granted by King Charles II. to his favourite Killigrew, by which the erection of a third theatre was threatened. Alarming to the shareholders, in addition to this untoward discovery, was the heavy loss nightly incurred by the performances of the company, who were exhibiting at the little theatre in the Haymarket with their usual success, but under the disadvantage of the size of the audience department, it being too contracted to admit of any adequate return to its necessary expenditure. To sum up all, the heaviest domestic affliction was pending over him, deeper in weight than all his failing resources and unlooked-for incumbrances, for which no provision had been made. The subscription of the shareholders had been raised and guarded to one end—the rebuilding of the theatre, and could not be diverted to any other; hence the embarrassment resulting from the discovery of the dormant patent, which at length, after difficulties almost insuperable, was bought up by Sheridan and Linley, as copartners, for the sum of nine thousand six hundred and twenty-five pounds, including expenses of transfer, &c.; and the title to the new theatre, according to the conditions of purchase, was rendered complete to the shareholders. In the interim, however, the interest of five per cent. on the sum raised had to be paid during the whole

period of negotiating, together with the ground-rent due to the Duke of Bedford, making the total loss, including the loss of time in the re-erection of the building, in a sum rather exceeding twenty thousand pounds. It is clear, therefore, that presuming Linley to be equal to his own share of this heavy loss, Sheridan had become incumbered with his own proportion, and it is only to be wondered at, the means he employed in meeting it without having any actual or reliable resources of his own, while it is to be remembered he contrived to sustain his town and country establishments without any diminution of that profuse expenditure which he had so lavishly indulged in; but he had a charm about him which could win the hearts and open the purse-strings of his opulent friends and admirers.

It was about two years antecedent to these events that I had been introduced by my father to this distinguished man and his family. I still retain in memory the pressure of his hand as he received me, clasping it within his own, and tendering the warmest welcome to his house and his home. I looked upon him with admiration, dazzled by the splendour of his commanding genius, attracted by that open-heartedness, freed from all restraint, with which he greeted the mountain boy who had roamed among the Cam-

brian hills with the warm enthusiasm of untrained youth, trained only in the classics by a Welsh clergyman.

I knew nothing of London, nothing of the world but what I gleaned from my readings and the periodical journals which found their way among the mountains. I knew scarcely anything of my parents but from occasional correspondence, having been taken from them in my infancy, and brought up and educated by my grandfather, or under his immediate superintendence.

To me all was new, it was a new world to which I was transferred; my grandfather was no more; there was a void created in my affections by his loss, and it is not to be wondered at if I centred them in one whose warmth of heart was in accordance with my own, buoyant in spirits, romantic as the glowing scenes in which I had been reared. Vigorous in health, rustic in manners, untaught in worldly wisdom,—my thoughts were free and so expressed; they were received with something more than a smile, probably incited more by my boorish simplicity and uncouth diffidence (not very flattering to my vanity) than for any other cause; be it as it may, I was introduced to Mrs. Sheridan and her son Thomas, with whom I contracted a reciprocative friendship which

continued thereafter until the day of his final departure for the Cape of Good Hope with his family, where he died.

I can hardly suffer myself to omit the mention of my first appearance within the walls of a theatre—the little theatre in the Haymarket—to witness the performance of a play from the pen of Coleman, the proprietor, called "The Battle of Hoxham," with the "Agreeable Surprise." I was accompanied by Mrs. Sheridan and her son Thomas who, I believe, took great delight in witnessing the effect of these performances on a young, enthusiastic mind, wholly undeveloped, lingering in its ignorance of amusements connected with the arts.

To me it was indeed an "agreeable surprise;" my whole soul was evolved in the scene before me; wrapped in wonder and pleased astonishment at the exhibition of an art hitherto to me unknown, I became insensible to all around me, and I believe in the silent expression of my amazed delight afforded more amusement to Mrs. Sheridan and her son than the best performances of the evening. I was familiar with race balls, assize balls, concerts, travelling jugglers, and the mountebank with his fire-eating clown, but I had formed no adequate notion of a theatre.

The vision of that night passed over my

sleeping dreams, and awoke my daily thoughts; the theatre was the palace of enchantment. Nor was I less powerfully entranced with the evening concerts of the drawing-room in that delightful home where Mrs. Sheridan presided, where the sacred harmony of a Handel and an Arne were poured forth in soul-subduing sublimity by the three sisters of immortal song, Mrs. Sheridan, Mrs. Tickel, and Miss Maria Linley.

I was a warm enthusiast. The rust of my youth, which had been trained in a wild and mountainous home, was fast wearing away under the genial influence of that association into which I had been admitted, and by which I became inspired, if I may be permitted to use that term, with reference to some puerile efforts of appearing among the muses. Music, music, such music as that which I so frequently heard poured from the soul of that sainted queen of song, the divine Cecilia, as she was called, drew from my impassioned pen the following lines, which I addressed to Mrs. Sheridan, and had the temerity of presenting to her myself. In introducing them here I am not influenced in favour of their worth, governed by no vanity, estimating them only in their effect of having produced a warmer and closer intimacy with that delightful family which I have survived, which is still as dear to me in memory now in

the declining winter of my old age as in the joyous springtide of my youth—

"MUSIC.—TO MRS. SHERIDAN.

"When Music first inspired the vocal strain,
In loud hosannas, seraphs, angels sung;
The choir of heaven blessed the Maker's name,
'Mid spheres revolving adoration rung.

"Then down to earth she dropp'd her lyre,
The muse's harp, the poet's fire;
Creation heard and felt the strain,
And echo'd back the song again.

"The ravish'd ear thus charm'd heard with amaze
The choral offspring of an angel's lays;
And new-created, gave the muse control
O'er all the fitful passions of the soul."

And here I shall wind up my own little narrative, apologizing to my readers for its introduction, which I have rendered simply to account for that close intimacy which from sympathy continued with the Sheridans even to the last. The closing days of that distinguished man saw me by his side; the last glimmering light beaming from those lustrous eyes, so soon to close on darkness, was shed on those around him and on the hand enclosed within his own. There was a luminous expression in those eyes as the sigh rose, as the lips struggled to reveal the thought which laboured there, and fled with the last

breath which faintly issued from those lips, and all was over. But more of this in proper time and place.

Educated to no profession or pursuit, all my time was at my own disposal, and I much question whether even by coercion I could have been brought, in the errantry of my enthusiasm, to any course of profitable or useful study in the eyes of those who were my natural guardians. No home was so sweet as that which I found in the society of this delightful family. I became its accepted member and the associate of one of the finest fellows in the world, inferior only to his father in wit, but inferior to no one in elegant accomplishments, manly grace, and the social qualities of the man. Admitted to be of the *ton*, Thomas, or, to use his more familiar appellation, Tom Sheridan, united in himself much of the genius of his father with several of the rarer perfections of his inimitable mother.

CHAPTER VI.

SHERIDAN'S PHILOSOPHY NOT SOCRATIC—DEATH OF MRS. TICKEL—DEATH OF MRS. SHERIDAN, OF MARIA LINLEY, AND OF MR. LINLEY.

PHILOSOPHY, Socratic philosophy, was a study not at all adapting itself to the taste of Sheridan, whose thoughts lay in the enjoyment of the passing time,—the feast of reason and the flow of soul.

We were one evening discussing the question, in which Mrs. Sheridan took part, the joyous Tickel and his amiable wife participating. We were a little family party, and Sheridan was at home—at home in every sense of the word—full of vivaciousness, full of that agreeable table-talk in which he indulged, and which never failed in its merriment to give zest to the repast and to sparkle with the wine. We were all in excellent spirits; Tickel had been amusing us with some of his fancies, and the conversation had turned on philosophy, to our infinite amusement—Sheridan's philosophy, which it was very questionable

if he possessed any of the leaven of the old school, even that of Epicurus, which was more consonant to his nature. Sheridan defended himself "against the adverse faction" with his usual drollery, and confessed to a philosophy of his own, while he deprecated that of the Socratian school as being neither divine nor human, outraging the laws of nature and libelling the Creator. "A cold and sterile monster with an iron head and marble heart; a block on which the rain falls and the sun shines in vain; a soulless, lifeless form, bearing the human semblance in its mould as that of Praxiteles the sculptor, who, in his abundant skill, shaped men like gods, but wanting the fire which Prometheus stole from heaven to animate the block which he had chiseled into form. Such philosophy which chills the warm current of the blood, freezes it in our veins, deadens the faculties, and destroys the senses, is not the philosophy I practise, or the doctrine I preach; no, my dear Bess," addressing himself to his wife, and kissing her soft hand, which he pressed with all the tenderness of an unabated love; "no, Bess, philosophy never won a woman's love, or in its own passionless nature kindled the smallest spark in the bosom it could not warm. Philosophy has no eyes, no ears, no tastes, and steels itself against those sympathies

which break forth in the heavenly nature of our origin, and are the charms of life; dull is that eye which cannot shed a tear, sterile the heart that cannot be moved to joy in her exuberance or by suffering in its agonies. There is no beauty in the cheek that pales not nor brightens to the exquisite emotions of the soul; no loveliness in the lip o'er which the breath of woman's tenderness never passes; and faith, I could never be tempted to press it, do you think I could, Bess? I can admire the marble Venus of the sculptor's studio, but it warms not, kindles not, in its coldness and its lifelessness."

The evening was spent in merriment, but was drawn suddenly to a close by the indisposition of Mrs. Tickel, and the appearance of some alarming symptoms requiring immediate medical attendance. She was a beautiful woman, the much-loved sister of Mrs. Sheridan, and labouring under the same disease, which was insidiously undermining their constitutions, fragile as the tenderest flower that sheds its odours in the greenhouse sheltered from the wind. She had been long bending to the inevitable destiny, heightened in charms as the destroyer approached, and partaking more of an angel nature as the narrow road was neared to heaven.

Consumption was traceable in the fevered

brightness of her large blue eye and in the hectic flush upon her cheek; it sometimes quivered on her lip and died away again, and sometimes creeping over her whole frame, reducing it to languor, and spreading over it the ashy paleness of the destroyer, then again lighting it up with the blooming beauty of renovated strength—reviving hope, only to increase its bitterness in despair!

Mrs. Tickel was taken down with some painful if not immediately alarming symptoms on that domestic evening at home; and under the advice of her physician, who had been summoned to her relief, was conveyed to her own apartment, where she lingered like an expiring taper, alternating its rays of light and shade till the sources of its vitality were drained, and darkness shadowed out its last faint beam—the passing herald of a closed existence.

For several days, nay, weeks, she lingered on the threshold of a future state, withering away, calmly and resignedly, to an irrevocable doom. This beautiful child of song was not less the child of prayer and thanksgiving; but they were breathed in silence, and only then in sorrow, when she contemplated the solitariness of the hearts of those whom she must leave behind to mourn a loss never to be replaced.

Her death was severely felt, still it was but lifting up the curtain of the grave which was preparing for that doomed family which Dr. Burney had pronounced to be the "nest of nightingales." Death had marked them for its prey; the decree had gone forth that they should be gathered in the pride of their youth, in the blooming of their beauty, the divinity of their song, and in the matchlessness of its eloquence. My aged eyes moisten as I trace their beloved forms in memory, and imagination brings back those pensive strains which once dwelt upon the enraptured ear which angels might have breathed around that throne eternal where angels only dwell. Yes, I could weep over the memory of those days which have passed away, the outshadowing of those forms once so dear, which are now no more in substance lingering on the scene. Alas! the scene remains the same,—trees expose their branches to the breeze, the same sun shines over all; the same moon sheds its silvery beams upon the land and upon the waters,—but those that were are not; a new generation has sprung up to occupy the space and pass away to the same shadowy home.

It is the misery of old age in its desolation, in its solitariness, to look back upon the past and find itself alone—alone in its wanderings, its

tenderest ties broken, all that was dear to it cut off by the inexorable, unsparing hand of time, while memory recalls back to the scenes THAT ARE, the beloved forms THAT WERE !—that keen-sighted and impressive memory, mysteriously charged with the pleasures, and the pains, and the penalties of a prolonged mortality.

Mrs. Tickel's death was severely felt by all who knew her worth, and lived in admiration of her many charms; but by no one so keenly as by that much-loved sister whose early destiny was closely interwoven with her own. The same shaft, which had scarcely cooled over its victim's grave, again was poised hurtling in the air, aimed with unerring hand at that nobler heart, sublimed in the purity of a chastened love, whose soul was tenderness, bright in the glorious treasures of a Christian's holiness of thought. It was to this end the fell destroyer bent his fatal bow to re-unite the sisters in the tomb, their sacred spirits in eternity, and their earthly remains to waste away together in mingled dust for ever and for ever.

Mrs. Sheridan had, since the birth of her last child and only daughter, betrayed the unmistakeable evidences of that incurable disease, which marks out its victim in its bloom, and clothes it in the transparent loveliness of an angel nature. We see it, we recognize it in its flickering lights

and shadows, and we know it to be Decline, the fevering worm preying upon the life that nurtures it in the bosom it destroys; we see it, and we know it, but baffling hope disarms us of our apprehensions; and as the end is not immediate, we mark not its approaches until the end is before us and the fiat passed.

It is remarkable in this diseasement of the mortal frame, the voice, which appears as if kindred with the soul, is not participant, but remains to the last in its sweetness, its fulness, and its unwavering firmness, pouring forth its richness in sainted melody, and then only passing away when the immortal is rendered up by weak and suffering mortality.

Mrs. Sheridan was never more lovely than when wasting away and departing like a shadow from our gaze, never more brilliant in sacred melody, which filled our ears, entranced our souls, and bespoke the heaven of harmony to which she was ascending; we could not look upon her as a mere being of this world, but something indistinctly seen, as a medium between this and the world to come. She inspired us with a holy reverence, subduing our thoughts and chastening them by example. We could not stand in her presence insensible of the halo which gathered around her brow in the softness and serenity of

her inspiration, and when she warmed with the divine melody of Arne in her impassioned execution of

"Angels ever bright and fair,"

she lifted our souls to hers, and we felt no more of earth or earthiness.

Was Sheridan alone in himself insensible of this moral influence? No, he was not! but unhappily it was corrective only during the presence of the lovely teacher, extending itself no further or beyond the periods when its teachings were administered. He never voluntarily absented himself from his home; in other words he never shunned the domestic circle, or felt any real and substantial pleasure in his gayer intercourse with the world in which he mixed. His wife was to him his all, and the cherished affections of his early days of wedded love had abated nothing in their fervency and zeal in the lapse of time when love is said to cool. He was the lover still, nor contemplated the loss which he was about to sustain. He could not reason with himself on its probabilities or endure its apprehensions.

Mrs. Sheridan was cheerful, animated, if not lively in his presence; it was the excellent temper of her mind to suppress her show of grief, its visible signs, and silently endure.

Her medical attendants, marking the progress

of that malady which could not be baffled by human skill and which was accelerated by a slight cold and the poignancy of that grief attending her sister's premature decease, earnestly recommended a change of scene and a change of air, which might prolong but could not prevail in averting the end which was at hand.

Clifton, romantic Clifton, with its spacious downs, its medicinal springs, its mild and genial airs, its May-blossoms in that delightful season when Nature in her exuberance is most alluring, was selected as the spot the best adapted to her taste and the most congenial to her feelings, calculated to awaken her from those acute dreamings nourishing the worm in its concealment.

Sheridan, with that zeal and devotion so thoroughly characteristic of his nature, hastened to secure a picturesque location in the neighbourhood of the downs according with the tastes of the invalid, where she might repose in quietude in a state of negative seclusion, but surrounded by those rich varieties of over-teeming nature by which the weariness of solitude should yield to the charms of nature in its placid action on the mind.

A quiet, peaceful cottage-house presented itself, somewhat rustic, but admirably arranged for immediate occupancy, in the neighbourhood of the

Henbury Cottages, adorned more by nature than art, sheltered from the winds and shielded from the sultry heat of a summer's sun. It had its little garden, abundant in the perfume of successional flowers, teeming in their varieties, with the well-trained honeysuckle and jasmine clustering its walls and redolent with the wild chirping of the birds of song. It had its little poultry yard with its well-fed tenantry, the strutting turkey, and the gayer peacock exulting in its plumage: "It reminded me," said Sheridan, "of our early cottage days, when we lived to love, and sought no other world than that which we found within ourselves."

The sufferer found it all her heart desired. She had her harp and her piano, her music and her well-selected library for amusement, and her carriage at command for occasional drives across the downs and to the wells—whose medicinal waters she partook of freely, as advised. Her health seemed to revive, but there was no return of strength, it was all illusion, like the cold beaming of the sun struggling through surrounding clouds, faint and evanescent.

There was one thing wanting, and one thing only; it was the constant presence of him whom she had selected as her partner through life, and that of her tenderly beloved son; they were away

from her—the one whose occasional visits were of necessity, the other in attendance on his studies under Dr. Parr. She was conscious of her danger, and bore the conviction with unparalleled equanimity; but the fear arose that she should be suddenly snatched away, without once more enfolding her much-beloved son in her arms, or whispering a fond and last adieu to him whose life and happiness was closely interwoven with her own. Dr. Bain was constant and unintermitting in his attentions. I had been earnestly solicited to take up my residence at the cottage, to be with her, to watch over her, and to communicate any change that might take place, or want she might express. I was young, but not thoughtless. I wrote from day to day, so did Dr. Bain, and frequently my letters were passed upon the road by the anxious husband, whose impatience under the pressure of exciting business could admit of no restraint. I had gathered from her own lips the painful expression of her fears, and I had written to that effect—as if Providence had so directed it, or the troubled thought had glanced at the fearful apprehension we know not, but Sheridan had written to his son, and seating himself in the mail, was with us ere our early breakfast hour.

Mrs. Sheridan had not risen, but she was aware of his arrival. She knew his footstep, and,

starting from her bed, with a shawl hastily thrown over her shoulders, with tottering step, only strengthened to the purpose by excitement, she descended the stair and threw herself into her husband's arms, exclaiming, "My dear Richard;" then murmuring, "You must not leave me, Richard (faintly). I feel Richard, my dear Richard, I shall not long be a trouble to you."

The tears gushed from his eyes, his bosom heaved convulsively; there was a change, a melancholy change that scattered all his cherished hopes, and found him in the madness of despair; he pressed her to his bosom, throbbing with unutterable anguish, and bore her to a couch on which he gently laid her, for she had fainted.

At this moment Dr. Bain entered unannounced; he had seen Sheridan in a post-chaise crossing the downs, and had hastened to the cottage to prevent the abruptness of that meeting, the shock of which he feared in the known sensitiveness of the one, and the utter prostration of the other; but he came too late, the shock had been felt, and its effects were lamentable in the utter prostration of the man and the deathlike faint which chilled and paled the cheek of her so much, so ardently beloved; the hand of death was upon her, the pulse had ceased to beat, the heart to throb; there was a vital suspense, still the life had not

ebbed, but was so far weakened as to be with difficulty restored.

That scene, that heartrending scene! I could not live through such a scene again; but I was young, and the impressions made on youth grow faint by time, though their traces may remain. Mrs. Sheridan revived under the influence of powerful restoratives, she brushed the tears swimming from her husband's eyes with gentle hand as he bore her to her room, and with the sweetest smile, pressing her lips to his, she said, "You will not leave me, Richard, will you?"

"Never, never," was the response; "never."

From that hour he never left her side: still struggling to suppress his immoderate grief, he never left her save at her own earnest importunity; and then, when he assumed his seat at the table, his tears would gush out afresh, and he would give free vent to that passion of grief which in her presence he had sufficient resolution to restrain.

Not a footfall was allowed to be heard in that house of sorrow, and even conversation was held in the lowest whisperings. We had many visitors, many fond inquiries; but a man-servant was stationed at the outer gate, to receive them and report the hopelessness of her recovery, and the lingering state in which she lay, piously and

patiently awaiting the hour when the thread which held her to life should be severed, and the last breath should pass away for ever. That strength of a virtuous mind, that passive fortitude which had sustained her in all her trials, never failed her; and she had learnt to chain the listening ear while speaking of her departure, and soothe and comfort that broken heart, vowing obedience to her mild entreaties.

At length that much-loved son arrived, accompanied by Dr. Bain, whom he had called upon as he was bidden, and was by him prepared on their road to the cottage for the death-bed interview which was to take place between the mother and her son. Dr. Bain, almost immediately upon entering the dining-parlour, proceeded to the sick chamber, to prepare his patient for the long looked-for interview; he found her calm with her little daughter by her side, wantoning with her tresses in childish glee. Dismissing Sheridan to the parlour below, to meet his son, his only son Thomas, the only pillar on which he could lean for strength,—the amiable Bain proceeded in his inquiries, and to the more immediate object of his mission; but he had scarcely commenced his concerted course of preparation, when she interrupted him,—

"I know what you would say, my dear doctor;

I know that my son Thomas is in the house, for although I have not heard his voice, his well-known step,—I have an intuitive knowledge of all that passes around me. I have a secret whispering that assures me of that which I have yet to encounter in the merciful Providence by which we are guarded, and in that assurance I prepare myself; give me but a few minutes, and I shall be ready to receive him." Saying this, she laid her head upon her pillow, closing her eyes and folding her arms upon her bosom; then, after a short pause, suddenly starting up, with a sweet smile upon her cheek, she added somewhat playfully, "Doctor Bain, cannot you minister to the mind; cannot you comfort my dear Richard, and prepare him for that event which you know is our common destiny, and to which it is our duty to submit with becoming patience and resignation?"

But Doctor Bain knew better than to try the experiment; he knew too much of human nature not to know that to offer consolation is but to pour oil upon the flame which before was languishing; he knew of no remedy for grief but that which proceeds from exhaustion and is self-supplied.

That confiding hope which had been so suddenly crushed réduced him to comparative help-

lessness; that romantic passion with which he first had wooed, and for which he had ventured his life, still held its mastery over his affection. What was to him the life which had lost its only charm; his fortitude was gone, his nervous system shattered. He had no reason in his despairing weakness; time, and time alone, could temper down the keen edge of sufferings which he had borne beyond endurance. He had a warm heart, over sensitive, impulsive, and misgoverned; but he had a refuge in his children; in the son he loved, and a daughter the image of her mother—too young to know her loss—claiming his tenderness and the transfer of his affections.

Description fails in narration; this, the first interview of the father and son under the impending calamity. Bathed in each other's tears, the sobs and sighs of unavailing grief found utterance, and mutual consolation gleamed from out the depths of misery and despair.

Thomas Sheridan and his angel mother met; the meeting was hastily concluded; his firmness gave way, and Dr. Bain drew him from the room. Exhausted with the exertions of the morning, she laid her head upon her pillow, and sank into a slumbering repose, produced by languor, and but slightly refreshing; towards evening she exhibited a restlessness indicative of

suppressed pain. Bain administered a slight sedative which produced something like composure. She awoke in the morning with slight shiverings; her feet were cold, her hands were cold, and the head wandered. That day, and the next, and the next, the occasional shiverings continued and increased in violence; the head, still wandering, betrayed no symptom of recognition of those gathered around her, watching with breathless silence and with awe the end which was at hand.

At intervals she would warble forth some of those sacred melodies which she had loved so much, and sung with such divinity of soul; and then would lay entranced in the calm sleep forerunning death, until aroused by those acuter pains forbidding torpor. The opiates were increased, to smooth the way and deaden the pangs writhingly endured.

On the fourth day after the arrival of her son (it was her last) she was restored to entire consciousness; her eye was bright, even luminous, her cheek glowing with the warmth of a new life; but it was the transparency of a life to come; her voice clear, full, and melodious. Bain shook his head and sighed—the end had come. Her pains had ceased, the coldness of her feet was creeping upwards, and no external applications could restore that warmth which had departed.

The sun was setting, and the evening of that day was drawing on when we were summoned to her bedside, to join in the reception of the Sacrament, which was administered and received by all with due devotion. A terrible scene ensued, of deep anxiety, silent and sorrowful; she alone was calm and collected. Then drawing her husband near her, and her son, clasping the hand of each, she whispered in their ear the words of comfort, teaching consolation and cheerful resignation; drawing her husband nearer to her, she gently addressed him, "Richard, our child, our dear child, I leave her as a pledge of our mutual affection, as a charge, not a heavy charge, for she will repay you for your attentions in solace of your troubles. . . . Thomas, you must unite the mother with the brother. . . . Richard, lay me by my sister's side. . . . I am going, Richard, I am going. . . . God bless you all. . . . My sight is growing dim; God bless——." Her head fell back upon her pillow as her arms relaxed their hold; the breath had passed away. THE END HAD COME.

Mrs. Sheridan's remains were deposited in her sister's grave in the cathedral at Wells, in Somersetshire.

The ceremony over, we removed to London; Sheridan saddened in spirit and inconsolable in

contemplation of the loss he had sustained. She was all the world to him, and the world was all a void without her; his child was some solace to him under his affliction, and he had learnt to love her the more and more dearly as she grew in her mother's likeness; but haplessly the mother's malady tore from him this last surviving comfort; her days were numbered; she was cut off, numbered with those that were, even in the early spring of her childhood.

Death had spread desolation around him; nor yet satisfied, brought down the last survivor of the syrens of song, the Linley sisters! Maria, the youngest of the nest of nightingales, became his victim while in the performance of a sacred melody. The blow was struck; she lingered for a few days, and was no more. Sheridan had found some comfort in his association with this the amiable sister of his departed wife; but even this solace was torn from him by the ruthless hand of the destroyer, and, to add to the burden of his woes, his father-in-law and partner in the theatre, overwhelmed with grief at the loss of his children, took to his bed and soon followed them to the grave.

It was a lamentable year of sorrow and mourning; nor can it be wondered at that Sheridan, who had no home but that which was of solitude

and painful memories, should elsewhere seek an alleviation to his manifold sufferings, and in intoxicating draughts drown the painful thought as it arose. Widely sought by convivial friends, allured away and, as it were, drawn from himself in the anguish of his heart, if we cannot admire him in the deficiency of that moral courage which should have been his guide under trials so severe, at least we should look to the causes ere we hastily condemn, and at least deplore them in the exhibition of his weakness and his frailty.

CHAPTER VII.

DESOLATE CONDITION—PARLIAMENT—SUPPORTS THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE—ITS COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES—HATFIELD FIRES AT THE KING—THE PRINCE OF WALES—MRS. FITZHERBERT—MUTINY AT THE NORE—DEATH OF PITT—SHERIDAN TREASURER OF THE NAVY — RETURNED FOR WESTMINSTER — DEFEATED AT WESTMINSTER — RETURNED FOR ILCHESTER — THE REGENCY—HIS POLITICAL INTEGRITY.

It is due to the memory of that excellent lady the close of whose days we have faithfully narrated, gleaned from the pages of our early years, traced by a hand too legible, too plain, too deeply engraven there to be effaced by time, while memory shall hold and intellect remain; it is due to her virtues, which could be never more than paralleled; it is due to those superior powers of mind, so lovelily developed in the melody of verse, as in the sacred minstrelsy of song, to cede to her the singular merit of controlling and conducting to its proper end the genius of a Sheridan! She had bound him in his fealty by the magic of her charms, the witchery of her love, and her never-failing duties as a wife and mother.

It was during her domestic reign of sixteen years that he developed those vast powers which astonished and delighted all and for all time, and carved for him an imperishable name, more enduring than the stone on which it was engraved. It was by her excellent management that his excesses were restrained and his thoughtlessnesses in expenditure so far controlled as to limit his little pecuniary embarrassments within the bounds, by which, with a slight economy, they might be relieved; unhappily, Sheridan knew nothing of economy in its practice, and little of the value of money but in its profuse expenditure; money and credit with him were of equal value, and both wastefully employed, whether for his own purpose or that of the needy preying on his bounty; thoughtless and generous, without reflecting on his means, he would more frequently incur an indebtedness on account of a petitioner than for himself.

Sheridan was now left alone in the indulgence of all his weaknesses, and in that morbid state of mind produced by his heavy afflictions, imposed upon himself no restraint in his indulgences in relief of the anguish of his loneliness. He had no home; a residence, but no home, and he sought it in the dissipations of a society with which he had become familiar, which his wit had compacted and enlivened; where, strange to say, it continued

to flash in its brightness while his heart was entombed, inurned in the grave.

He could not be alone, alone!—and his pillow was moist with his tears; we have seen him leave the table with the breakfast untouched, because the chair was vacant on which she had sat, and her place could not be supplied; his was an affection which time might soften down but never efface. Mental occupation might have proved curative of his diseasement, but the skeleton in the closet, so beautifully described by Addison in one of his papers in the classical *Spectator* was more than he could encounter.

He became very little attentive to his parliamentary duties, but was to be found in his seat upon momentous occasions on any great debate, rallying with the Opposition in defence of popular rights, in support of the revolutionary spirit exhibited in France, and the inherent rights of an enslaved people of shaking off a despotic government. He deplored the excesses of popular indignation, deprecated any interference in their internal affairs, and openly avowed himself the friend of popular government. He saw nothing to apprehend in the establishment of a republic in Europe, and referred to America as teaching a lesson to the world, where every man assumed to himself a monarchy in his own person in the

exercise of his civic rights; where the minority willingly, voluntarily yielded to the majority; where peace and harmony prevailed, in obedience to the laws which they had themselves framed and endorsed; where agriculture was sustained by labour, unimpeded by the tithing-man, or the pressure of taxation, robbing labour of its due; where the arts of manufacture were rising, and the flag of successful commerce floated on its gigantic rivers and on the seas. He sincerely deplored the existence of those horrors which disgraced the cause of liberty in France, which stained the country with blood, and led its myriad victims to the scaffold. It was, indeed, the reign of terror in that devoted land, where oppression had so long prevailed; it had provoked enthusiasm in its fall, and the madness of jealousy in apprehension of its return; nor would that jealousy be appeased until the last vestige had been swept away of the despotism of the Bourbons and the ancient *noblesse*. The struggle, then, was life or death, and the decree went forth, —death to the enemies of the Republic. Nor was this sanguinary spirit suffered to die away or slumber, sated with vengeance, on the hosts of victims it had doomed; but, to refresh its anger, to keep alive its flagging spirit if such should appear, foreign intervention with its threatening

armaments, its military mercenaries, was called into the field, surrounding France, demanding the restoration of a monarchy she had denounced. Did the heart quail, did it exhibit any evidences of fear? No; a fresh and exterminating slaughter of the monarchists ensued, and the troops of France, voluntarily embodied, banded together by the holy tie of brotherhood, advanced to the invader, met him, hurled the death-blow with unerring aim upon his serrated ranks, drove him back in overwhelming disorder, and planted the proud flag of freedom in the blood of its enemies, to root and flourish for all time; the blow is struck, the cry is spread abroad: "Liberty, liberty, and death to tyranny."

"The Bourbon dynasty is no more, it has ceased to reign; and when the angry passions shall have subsided, softening down to the arts of peace, the government established in security by the people's will, firm in rule, moderation guiding its measures, and the bonds of amity with surrounding nations sealed, we shall feel all the advantages resulting from extended commerce—increased manufacture, and reciprocative trading.

"Shall we then stay the hand of destiny, and pour out our blood and our treasure in the vain effort to control what destiny demands? Shall we risk the security of our own constitutional

government by demanding the re-establishment of a despotic monarchy in France, against the sovereign will of a sovereign people, who have shed their best blood in crushing its tyranny, its proverbial profligacy and gross misrule?"

These opinions, delivered in sound policy, were not responded to by the people generally, whose sympathies were strongly excited in favour of the unfortunate Louis and his family. While the reign of the regicides Robespierre, Marat, and Danton revived the dormant hatred of the French (inherent in their very nature) of the English, the butcheries of the guillotine were presented to them with aggravated horrors; the decapitation of the King, of the Queen, Marie Antoinette, of the Princess Lamballe, attended with the most disgusting and inhuman ferocities of a more than brutal nature, warmed up the generous and nobler feelings of the nation, and strengthened the arm of Pitt in his warlike measures, and enabled him to subsidize foreign power to crush the hydra monster reigning in terror and ruling in blood. Neither Fox nor Sheridan gained anything in popularity in the cause.

The defeat of the French fleet by Admiral Lord Howe on the first of June, 1794, was hailed as a most glorious triumph and a brilliant evidence of the superiority of the British arms, and the inva-

sion of France was looked to as affording another opportunity of enacting the scenes of a Poictiers, a Cressy, an Agincourt, and a Blenheim. The enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds in their anticipations of vengeance on the assassins of France, as they were termed, and the minister was goaded on to aggressive warfare on infidelism, with its revolting enormities in every grade of crime.

The *émigrés*, such as were fortunate enough to escape mobocratic tyranny, and land on our shore, were received with the deepest commiseration and the utmost hospitality, their terrible narratives still further inflaming the public mind.

To the Duke of York was entrusted the command of an army which had slumbered in peace for many years, with scarcely a veteran who had served on the American continent and had become familiar with service.

The Prince of Wales tendered his services to the King in a manly and energetic letter, which was attributed to Sheridan, and certainly bore the impress of his masterly pen. Those services were rejected—the reasons assigned are not now to be questioned or determined on.

The disastrous result of the campaign in France under the command of his Royal Highness the Duke of York is a matter of history, and not necessary to be included in these pages; but

it afforded a pleasantry on the part of Sheridan, exhibiting his own feelings on the subject of interference in French affairs. At a dinner of a political character, he proposed as a toast—"His Royal Highness the Duke of York and his brave *followers*." It may be explained, the Duke had a very narrow escape at Dunkirk, and was hotly pursued by the enemy pressing forward to his capture. It must not be presumed that Sheridan by any means attempted to justify or even palliate the atrocities committed by the Conventional Government of France; his argument was intended to go no further than to show the ruinous consequences of British interference with French affairs, and with thirty millions of people united in one common cause—that of defending their own rights and redressing their own wrongs; but he was very speedily afforded an opportunity of evincing his loyalty to his King, which was suspected, and his devotion to his country.

On the night of the 15th of May, the King, the Queen, and the rest of the royal family, the Prince of Wales alone excepted, visited the new theatre to witness the performance, as the bills of the day announced, by command of their Majesties, of that fine old comedy "She Would and She Would Not," with other entertainments. The house was crowded to suffocation. Numbers

were turned away who could not obtain admission to any part of the house, while the lobbies were crowded with gentlemen who had paid their money at the doors, notwithstanding the assurance that not a seat could be had, or even standing room with a view to the stage. The receipts of the night, by the treasurer's account, were eight hundred and thirteen pounds, being upwards of two hundred above the actual capacity of the theatre, and exceeding by one hundred and fifty the opening night. Perhaps it was one of the finest sights the eye ever rested upon—the old King, in the vigour of health, seated by his Queen, with six of his sons and five daughters, collectively the finest family in the world.

I had dined that day with Sheridan, in company with Lord John Hay, of Kinnoul. We were bent on the play, and about half-past five we went to the theatre, accompanied by our host, who was prepared to receive his Majesty in full court costume. On our arrival we found, to our great mortification, that every private box had been secured, and was then filled even to repletion; that even the manager's box, reserved for his own use, was amply tenanted by noble personages, who would not be denied. We had, therefore, the only alternative of standing behind the wings, or accepting stools in the orchestra

behind the big drum, but happily immediately in front of the royal box.

It was one of the peculiar virtues of the good old King—punctuality; he was never known to be a minute behind time. Precisely as the clock struck six, a piece of ordnance in St. James's boomed out his departure from Buckingham Palace, and another announced his arrival at the doors of the theatre. All was commotion. "Down! down! hats off!" was the universal cry. On the arrival of the yeomen of the guard, who took their station on the stage near to the royal box, excitement was at the highest, and a thousand voices roared out, "God save the King!" At length Sheridan appeared at the back of the box, ushering the King, and conducting him to his seat, performing the same office for the Queen. In an instant the whole audience sprang to their feet, with the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, bowing to the royal box, and shouting with all the strength of lungs, "God save the King!" A moment of greater enthusiasm never prevailed; every eye was directed towards Majesty. In one instant all was consternation, and alarm was depicted on every countenance. A shot had been fired from the pit in the direction of the King; its whizzing was distinctly heard in the direction from which it proceeded, and lodged in the drapery

immediately above the King's head. It was an unerring aim, as it afterwards appeared, and must have struck its mark but from an accidental circumstance, if not, so to speak, an act of Providence. The assassin had rested his pistol, or was leaning over the shoulder of a gentleman sitting next him, who, feeling the pressure, shifted his position at the moment the pistol was fired, by which the muzzle was slightly elevated, and the shot was lodged in the drapery, as before described. Nothing could exceed the terror which this event produced—the horror and dismay of so large an audience. Ladies fainting or screaming in hysterics, and the gentlemen shouting curses and imprecations on the monster, on whom they were impatient to inflict summary justice; but he had been secured almost in the instant of his daring, and was hauled over the spikes dividing the orchestra from the pit to the stage, where he was delivered over to the Bow Street officers who were in attendance.

We may describe, but language can scarcely convey an idea of the anguish of the house, mingling with the joy manifested on the King's escape. He was the only man in the house who kept his position and remained unmoved, while his daughters were dissolved in tears, and the Queen could with difficulty suppress her sobs.

Lord Dartmouth, the lord chamberlain, who was in attendance, approaching his Majesty, with great terror expressed on his countenance, earnestly entreated his Majesty to retire; on which his Majesty, with great serenity, replied, "My lord, I am with my people; they confide in me—why should I show less confidence in their affectionate loyalty?"

The Queen entreated, in the greatest state of alarm; but the King reassured her, with a smile and affectionate pressure of the hand. His lordship retired behind, exclaiming, "Well, it is not very pleasant to stand and be shot at." The King actually laughed at the remark, and continued bowing to the congratulations pouring in upon him from all quarters of the house. It was long before the audience could become tranquillized and the performance be permitted to begin.

In the mean time a partial examination of the prisoner took place behind the scenes, conducted by Sir Richard Birnie, the magistrate, in the presence of the Duke of York, who took the greatest interest in the proceedings.

To the question, "Your name?"

"Hatfield," was the stern reply.

"Your profession?"

"You needn't ask that question; you may see that by my wounds. This cut I got at Valen-

ciennes, and this one here—pointing to a severe wound in the head—I got at Dunkirk."

Not to continue our report of the interrogations further; suffice it, Hatfield, upon trial, was pronounced lunatic, and committed to the Bethlehem Lunatic Asylum in Old Street Road.

With all possible speed, the performers were collected on the stage to join in the national anthem; the curtain drew up, the performers made their obeisance, and never was that anthem sung with so pure a zeal and earnestness of devotion.

Sheridan, not less excited than those around him, during the short interval between the removal of Hatfield and drawing up the curtain, wrote the following stanza, produced on the spur of the moment, on a card, borrowing a pencil from John Bannister, who, after the performance, claimed the card, which was readily yielded, and remained with him, as an invaluable autograph, until his death:—

"From every latent foe,
And the assassin's blow,
God save the King.
O'er him thy arm extend,
O Lord our God defend
Our Father, Prince, and Friend,
God save the King."

Mrs. Jordan is now no more, but those who can remember her will bear testimony to the peculiar richness of her voice, its unequalled sweetness and sublime pathos. In her rendition of these lines she ceased to be an actress—pouring her whole soul into the melody, perfect in point and expression. She thrilled every heart, and every eye rejoiced with a tear in the King's safety; nothing could be more appropriate, no thought more happy; it wrought upon the feelings with an intensity evoking the loudest bursts of loyalty and affection, and from the King himself, it was observed, a sympathizing tear fell in response to those of his people.

"Charming woman, Charlotte; charming woman, that," he whispered in the Queen's ear, pointing out Mrs. Jordan, as the performers retired on the fall of the curtain; "Don't wonder —not surprised, not surprised, Charlotte; not at all; dare say, good creature, considering—that is to say, considering actress and all that. Clarence, wild boy—good taste—can't marry, Charlotte; no, can't marry!" The Queen nodded her head in approval, but not sufficiently composed to comprehend exactly what he meant to convey.

At the fall of the curtain on the close of the comedy, the royal party retired, receiving and acknowledging the cheers of the audience.

It does not fall within our views of following the subject of our memoir through all the various subjects composing his political career. His speeches in the House on all important questions touching the national honour, the security of the constitutional crown, and the rights which he held to be inherent in the people, attest the vigour of his intellectual powers and the purity of his patriotism. He was a reformer in the truest sense of the word, an uncompromising advocate of the liberty of the press—holding it as the palladium of liberty, declaring that he would rather see it existing in its licentiousness than curbed or restrained in the free expression of its opinions.

To his speeches we may refer for the unabated vigour with which he sustained the cause he advocated, and for his enlightened views of what he conceived to be the proper course of government. A Whig in principle, but no factional member; opposed to Toryism, and to the gigantic power it assumed under the administration of William Pitt, he could not but admire the heroism of that distinguished minister, who held to the helm of government in the roughest storm with which it had ever been assailed.

He deprecated the war with France, and resisted it with all his eloquence; but when the

sword was drawn and there was no alternative but an inglorious peace, the soundness of his reasoning was in favour of the most vigorous means by which it might be brought to a glorious issue.

He exulted in the fall of Egalité, who signed the warrant for his monarch Louis' death, as an act of retributive justice; and deplored that the monster, whose crimes demanded a more ignominious end, should be brought to the same scaffold on which his cousin's blood had flowed—deserving rather to be delivered to the people he had betrayed, to be trodden to the earth by the savage fury he had excited, and his bones scattered on its surface. No one pitied his fall; the regicide was execrated even by the bloodstained hypocrite Robespierre, and the sanguinary Marat.

He deprecated the war, as tending to promote those evils which it was prosecuted to avert; but the country was with the minister, as was evidenced in overwhelming majorities in both Houses of Parliament, by which his measures were sustained. He could not but admit in private conversation that Pitt, with his placid energy, his cool eloquence, and his unexampled firmness, which could stand unmoved and unwavering amid the most disastrous events, was the man for the times in the proper place.

His opposition was tempered to the occasion; he could not approve his policy, but his measures sustaining the dignity of the nation, although severely scrutinized, were acquiesced in, to the disappointment of the party with which he had acted, and who looked for submission to its tenets. But he could not be allied to any opposition at the sacrifice of his independence.

He argued against the introduction of French loyalists into the British service with unsurpassing eloquence and manly feeling; he forcibly portrayed the results in the event of capture of allies that could only be enlisted with the halter round their neck, whose fate was sealed with the certain doom—a traitor's doom. His arguments were irresistible, and did equal honour to his head and heart.

He condemned the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act as a violent and dangerous proceeding, subversive of the Constitution, and not called for by any exigency. Pitt, however, by a species of espionage which he had established, by which he had rendered himself perfect in his knowledge of the existence of secret organizations and corresponding societies, persisted in his measure, which was carried by an overwhelming majority. No minister ever wielded so much power in the management of public affairs; every man who

had a stake in the ground or property to defend, gave him his entire confidence, as against foreign aggression and domestic conspiracy.

He supported the claims of the Prince of Wales to relief from the oppression of his private debts upon principle—the honour and dignity of the crown and the claims of honest creditors; and grieved at the compromise, when the King had consented to recommend to Parliament the payment of those debts on the Prince's consent to intermarry with a princess, Caroline of Brunswick, while his affections lay with a lady whom he had unquestionably married privately, and in the violation of that inhuman enactment which prohibited his union with a British subject. He knew the Prince's attachment for Mrs. Fitzherbert, whatever might be his gallantries elsewhere, was too firmly rooted to be disposed of, and he foresaw all the fatal consequences which ensued. He knew the virtuous principles of that much-injured lady, and that all further intercourse would cease between them on the consummation of that projected marriage; he knew the Prince's feelings on that interesting subject, and felt keenly for the royal victim, who, whatever her merits, was pre-doomed to the sacrifice; it was sufficient that she was forced upon his acceptance, and there were enough around him of the dames of quality who had

shared in his intrigues to increase his aversion to the lady who was to assume his titles and, in all human probability, become the sharer of his throne.

The marriage was legally solemnized, but the frailty of the union, if it may be so termed, binding together two persons so opposite to each other in their dispositions could be called a union, was soon discoverable. It was whispered in the palace of Carlton, it was whispered abroad, and scarcely a month had intervened when it became public talk, to the great grief of the afflicted monarch, who warmly espoused the cause of his niece. He was her only protector. A separation ensued; his intercourse with Mrs. Fitzherbert was never renewed; their meetings were few and casual, and only in the presence of a fashionable assemblage. To this circumstance may probably be attributed that abandonment to libertinism which formed the sequel to his life.

The Princess gave birth to a daughter in the person of her Royal Highness Charlotte of Wales, and the separation of the royal parents became final. The part taken by Sheridan in these domestic troubles was painful but consistent. He had foreseen them, predicted them, and materially aided in tempering their asperities. The adviser and confidant of the Prince, to whom he was

bound by ties of the sincerest friendship, he never lost sight of what was respectfully due to her rank and character.

But a new field was soon opened to him for the display of his eloquence and the purity of his patriotism, in the sudden outbreak of the mutiny at the Nore, an event which had filled the nation with consternation and alarm, paralyzing even the genius of a Pitt in devising the means of its suppression. The contagion had spread from ship to ship as they lay at their moorings, and the flag of revolt was hoisted at the masthead. The mutineers had elected out of their own body their officers in command, had seized upon the stores, armed themselves out of the ships' stock with cutlasses and pistols, looked to their ammunition, which had been amply provided by government, and cleaned out the guns; thus preparing for action in the event of their being opposed in putting out to sea. They had resolved upon their own commodore—Commodore Parker—an able-bodied seaman like themselves, who became by these means invested with the command of one of the finest fleets that ever sailed upon the ocean or sustained the glory of the British flag. At no period was the safety of the country more seriously imperilled; for although it was confined in the first instance to the returned fleets from

foreign stations, there was no knowing the extent of its diffusion, and apprehension feared the worst.

Sheridan flew to the rescue, and never were his powers more brilliantly displayed than in his address to the House. It was only equalled by his Begum oration in the charge against Warren Hastings, nor were its effects less in producing conviction and unanimity.

He disclaimed all party feeling, denounced it as unfaithful to their constituents, and treasonable to their King and to their country. "Disaffection has appeared in our fleet at the Nore, mutiny has appeared among their crews. They have lowered the time-honoured flag which has waved in triumph over every foreign foe, and hoisted up in its place the signal of their rebellion. Shall it be believed, shall it go abroad, that those giant hearts which have so long borne the battle and the breeze, with unequalled heroism, in support of the national honour—shall it be believed that these guardians of our shores, protectors of our commerce, shall now, sated with triumphs, return to us to sheath their daggers in the bosom of our common country? No, sir, it is not in the nature of the British seaman to disgrace the flag under which he has sailed, or prove treacherous to the cause he is pledged to maintain, thus rendering himself the

assassin of the land of his birth. Some wrong, sir, some wrongs lay heavy at his heart. . . . . Let them be redressed; but let him know in the measures we may adopt we are not to be intimidated by treason exhibited in an armed rebellion; that we are united in its resistance, powerful in our resources, and ready to pour out the last drop of our blood in defence of our land, equally against domestic treason as foreign invasion. . . . Are we in the position which the urgency of the case demands? If not, can we place ourselves in that position by which we may exhibit to a jealous world that power which defies sedition at home or foreign intrigue; that power which recruits its strength in proportion to the means by which it is assailed? Let these misguided men know that we have a 'touch of their condition'; that this House is animated by one common feeling, and *that* the honour and glory of their country; that we are ready to listen to their complaints and redress their substantiated wrongs, but not before they have returned to their duty, torn down the signal of their treasons, hoisted again the flag they have disgraced, and surrendered their leaders to expiate their crimes, and subject themselves to our merciful consideration."

We have but slightly sketched from some of the passages of his speech which, in our hands,

partake but little of that fire which resolved the House as it were in a minute, breaking up, as with the wand of the enchanter, those confederacies aiming at power and its subversion, breaking into the one enthusiastic spirit of patriotism and loyalty.

The records of his eloquence, while they convey to us some idea of his master-mind, fail in yielding us any conception of the brilliance of his delivery, the forcible energy with which he absorbed to himself the feelings of his auditory, the magnetic influence with which he attracted to himself all that was ranged within the compass of his voice.

We remember an anecdote of Pope which, although probably familiar to our readers, is so applicable to Sheridan and his reporters that we needs must quote it briefly as we can.

Pope was writhing under the torture of hearing his poem of the "Essay on Man" being read to some drawing-room young ladies, who were expressing themselves in terms of unqualified praise of the merits of the production. His presence had not been perceived, as, entering the room, he had thrown himself on a sofa there to await their recognition. At length the eyes of the little party wandered in his direction. "Dear me, Mr. Pope," was the general exclamation, as they

advanced to greet him, and the gentleman, to apologize for inattention. "But you see, Mr. Pope, when you are absent you are present in your admirable works, which I was reading to the infinite delight of these ladies."

"No, sir; no, sir;" replied the mortified and sarcastic poet, who could indifferently suppress his agony at the torture to which his lines had been subjected; "not mine, not mine; or if mine, so disfigured that I have not been able to recognize them."

The death of the great minister William Pitt, in 1806, and the difficulty of reconstructing a Cabinet which had lost its leader, led to the most embarrassing difficulties. He was the soul and life of the administrative body, himself the chief; and who could assume the mantle which glowed with his noble qualities of mind, shone in the splendour of that gigantic energy by which he quelled rebellion, and kept in check that enormous power of France which had overrun the rest of Europe under its consulate, pillaging and destroying, overturning, and rooting up ancient monarchies and states, establishing more extensively that reign of terror which had sprung up in Paris and raged in France alone, devouring and destroying until, in its increased thirst for plunder, it scattered its bandit hordes over the whole of

Europe, conquering and enslaving with all the barbarities of an uncivilized age, when human rights were limited to the power that sustained them, and the title-deed to the throne or the cottage was the blood-stained sword which had forced its way through the flames which it had lit up on the altars—the throne and the cottage hearths which it desecrated? LIBERTY was engraven on the standard under which they fought —to enslave. EQUALITY the motto on the sword-blade which was wielded for plunder and oppression. Pitt, the real champion of the social rights of man, of the constitutional monarchy—the unyielding champion who had stemmed the torrent of a world in arms, encountering adversity undismayed, and cheering the drooping spirits of the people, urging them to still further enterprise,—was swept away from us at an alarming crisis when the modern Attila wielded the destiny of France, and, in the pride and arrogance of an unequalled despotism, demanded the homage of the nations. Pitt knew there could be no peace with France under the powers that ruled; the experiment had been tried under the Sidmouth administration; it had failed, and no change had taken place by which the hope of peace could be obtained upon any terms consistent with the honour and dignity of the nation. His death was deeply deplored,

and by no one more sincerely than his political adversary Sheridan.

Pitt's colleagues felt deeply the loss of their great leader, and though trained and reared to a perfect assurance of the soundness of his policy and the necessity of its prosecution, feared to grasp the reins which had fallen from his master-hands; while the country, alarmed at the gloomy aspect of public affairs, was clamorous for a peace upon any terms, and for a change in the administration. These circumstances combined called Charles James Fox into the vacant seat in the Cabinet, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan to office, as treasurer of the navy, an appointment being literally no more than a mere sinecure, and under any other circumstances beneath his acceptance; but Sheridan's habitual good nature could scarcely be provoked by any overlooking of his merits, and while he left himself subject to party nomination he could never condescend to solicit.

The Fox administration brought back many of the stragglers of the Whig party who had seceded from the ranks; and, although public confidence was not very warmly expressed, the reliance was peace, which it was presumed he could effect, since his cordial reception at the Tuileries by the First Consul, and the familiarity of their intercourse during his stay in the French capital,

at the period of the short-lived peace of 1802-3, furnished that assurance; and while it was the sole cause of his elevation to office, would have sustained him in it with moderate measures, and his long-since pledged system of retrenchment and economy.

Sheridan was passive: he did not believe in that sudden transition from a state of warfare prosecuted upon principle, and a state of peace in which that principle was wholly abandoned; he could not be brought to rely upon the permanence of any peace with Napoleon Bonaparte and the concessions demanded, and which in the event must be submitted to that arch-councillor and adviser, Talleyrand. Bonaparte was in the fulness of his power, and his arrogant exactions and demands arose in proportion to his successes, while his hatred of England was manifest in his every action. She was the inflexible, persistent enemy he had not conquered, and which he had determined by every united effort to subdue.

Sheridan was too shrewd not to see the difficulties of their new position: he doubted the possibility of any peace which could satisfy the demands of the country, still firm in the attitude of defiance; while France, flushed with her victories, felt herself in no condition to yield in the arrogance of her pretensions. But, strange infa-

tuation! while in the soundness of his judgment in state policy, he betrayed an utter want of it in his own. Urged by his ambition to represent the city of Westminster in Parliament, he stepped aside from the solid rock of his parliamentary independence, secured in the hearts of a people devoted to his cause. He abandoned Stafford, which would have clung to him in weal and in woe, through life and to death: his vanity and ambition led him, scripturally speaking, to erect his house upon the sands, and he became the victim of his folly.

It is remarkable that, with the quickness of his perceptions, the rapid glance of forethought which was so evident in all his public movements, should have forsaken him at the eventful period when all his future was poised in the scale; but so it was, and his future was decided.

Westminster returned him to the Commons, in the seat vacated by the death of Fox. Short-lived, indeed, was that Whig administration which came into power under the influence of his name, and was scattered abroad like chaff before the wind by his expiring breath.

Within that memorable year, 1806, three distinct administrations had existed, bearing the seals of office; and also records the burial of three of the most distinguished men, taken each in his

distinct position, the world had ever known as co-existent, or, in other words, cotemporary with each other—Nelson, Pitt, and Fox.

We are now drawing to the close of our political life, to be wound up with the close of this chapter. The re-formation of the Addington administration, pledged to the policy of its great predecessor, drove Sheridan back again to the ranks of opposition ere he was well warmed in his official seat as treasurer of the navy.

It may be remarked, as a singular act of condescension upon the part of the King, that he sent for Sheridan, expressing his desire that he should continue where he was, explaining to him that it was not necessary he should sustain the Cabinet by his vote in any case inconsistent with his own views; but Sheridan respectfully declined the gracious offer, saying, "May it please your Majesty, I came in with the party with whose fortunes I am allied, and honour demands that I go out with them." The good old King shook his head in disapproval, and the matter ended.

On a dissolution of Parliament, Sheridan offered himself again for Westminster. Notwithstanding every effort that his friends could make, with poor old Mother Butler in the field beating up for recruits, and marching up at the head of her

battalion to the poll, he was defeated. The influence of the Russells, of the Percys, and the Grosvenors was pledged in other quarters—that influence which had never failed in the cause of Fox. The government influence, which could always secure one of its own members, was against him, while the mobocracy was ranged under the banner of a Burdett, who wielded the purse of his father-in-law, the wealthy Thomas Coutts. What, then, was left to him but the occasional dropping in of a few split votes from the ranks of his adversaries? His defeat was certain, and it is to be questioned whether, upon after consideration, he could have been very sanguine of the result.

Michael Angelo Taylor procured his return for the borough of Ilchester, but he deeply deplored the loss of Stafford. By one false step the borough of Stafford was irretrievably lost. He had deserted it, and his desertion could never be forgiven.

His visits to Carlton House were not less frequent than upon former occasions. An informal separation had taken place between the Prince and Princess of Wales, who had taken up her residence at Blackheath, whither she had retired, giving up Carlton altogether; and the hospitalities of the palace were extended to the miserable satellites basking in royal favour, and to the *roué*

who, priding himself on his reception, rejoiced in wearing the livery of a disgraceful servitude. Sheridan, however, was the favoured guest—admitted to privacy, the most earnestly sought, and the highest prized—the depositor of his secrets, and the counseller and adviser in his domestic difficulties. Leaping over the gap of little more than two years, the incidents of which are scarcely worth recording, so far as the subject of our memoir is concerned, we arrive at that period of our history when the fate of the Whigs was to be decided by an act of Providence affecting the destiny even of nations as well as monarchies.

Reports had for some time prevailed in the fall of the year 1810, that symptoms had appeared of the return of that unhappy malady, which in the year 1789 had incapacitated the King in the exercise of his controlling duties. The whispers had hitherto been confined within very narrow circles, but measures appearing necessary in the settlement of a regency, Sheridan became negociant of the terms upon which it could be accepted, if the circumstances of the case demanded. At length it was announced the royal mind had hopelessly broken down, leaving small chance of its ever being restored. The Prince of Wales was immediately installed in a restricted regency for one year, when, should it appear upon medical

examination, that there was no abatement in his Majesty's lamentable disorder, then to assume the entire functions of the crown, the same as though he had arrived at it by succession. The Prince on his accession, if we may so term it, with a filial piety for which his friends did not give him much credit, and his enemies pronounced hypocrisy, in other words, political apostasy, announced as his first measure his determination of continuing in office the officers of the crown, and the cabinet which his father the King had approved,—affording as a reason, that as he only held the crown in trust, he did not feel authorised in making any changes in disobedience of the royal will; that, should the King recover, he might restore the crown as he had received it. The Whigs were chagrined but not dismayed; the reason assigned could not be disputed; thus they were left to their own resources, to rally in their strength in defeat of the administration, when it was relied upon, the Prince would gladly avail himself of the opportunity of calling them to his counsels.

Sheridan, however, was not so strongly impressed with this opinion. He had perceived something like a wavering, and a difficulty in adjusting the question to his own views, exciting a suspicion in his mind that the Prince was not

Whiggishly inclined in the formation of a new cabinet, uncalled for by Parliament; in this he was the more confirmed by his endeavours of conciliating the ministry and bringing them over to his views in a certain delicate investigation, about to be proceeded in, and which had been submitted to the consideration of those in whose principles he had formerly concurred. Sheridan, although warmly attached to the Prince, was not the man to confederate against a woman, whose misfortunes were heaped upon her, and who, under the afflictions of the monarch, had lost her only protector. Slander had been busy in her repudiation, and rumour charged her with crimes amounting to treason; she was accused of having become the mother of a male child, in violation, &c., &c., and to the disgrace of the crown, &c., &c. Many fathers were given to this spurious offspring, among whom we shall not hesitate to name Captain Manby, of the Royal Navy, a celebrity of the day, and Sir Sidney Smith, a gallant officer, the hero of Acre.

Sheridan knew too much of court intrigue, too much of slander in its incipiency, and in its growth, to place much reliance in report; and he well knew the Prince would not be over-nice in the means of getting rid of his wife; still he could not but feel it necessary to institute an in-

quiry by which the Princess might be convicted or absolved of the weighty charge that was brought against her.

The Princess herself demanded investigation loudly and vehemently. The Prince, according to the declaration of his Whig friends by whom he was surrounded, "with that magnanimity which so eminently characterised his general conduct, however painful to his feelings, consented to her Royal Highness's demand, sincerely believing in her innocence." His enemies, however, or those opposed to his licentious habits, which were too notorious and probably too much exaggerated to escape public animadversion, attributed to him more culpable motives in his acquiescence, believing that perjury would be employed to victimize the unhappy object of his condemnation. Sheridan took small share and but slender interest in this distressing investigation, which happily terminated in favour of the accused.

It must be remarked, this prosecution or delicate investigation, as it was named, was conducted under the immediate superintendence of the Whigs collected round Carlton Palace, and the noble defence of that much-wronged lady conducted by the members of the Cabinet and their leader Percival—that upright man whom interest could not swerve from the strict line of his duty.

Sheridan was of opinion, and no man had a better opportunity of arriving at a correct judgment than himself, that Percival was in constant advisement of the Regent during the progress of the investigation, and who from some inscrutable motive or other lent a secret hand to her defence while sustaining in the same secret manner her persecutors. "It was painful," said Sheridan, "to contemplate his insincerity to his Whig friends whom he was sacrificing to the unpopularity of his own cause, while he was fortifying himself with reasons for ejecting them from his counsels." Still to Sheridan himself, to all appearance, he kept faith, but it is much to be questioned whether he had not become so necessary to him that he could not be dispensed with; the time had not arrived when he could exhibit the cold shoulder.

Friendship becomes troublesome when it presumes to be corrective. Many of the acts of the Regent he could not justify to himself; he had called upon Sheridan to assist in intrigues which he (Sheridan) could not join in as a man proud of the integrity of his public character. He could not betray his party, he did not always concur with them, but his defection in such cases was upon principle, and the free exercise of a discreet judgment. The Prince, who had sustained the Tory adminis-

tration, and disgracefully thrown off the party which had clung to him in his embarrassments with a fidelity which had deeply injured their popularity, was still anxious to retain the affections and services of Sheridan, confident in his fidelity and the sincerity of his attachment. Parliament was about to be dissolved, and he well knew the difficulty of obtaining a seat in the Commons by one with slender resources who had unseated himself for Stafford and sustained a defeat for Westminster. The Prince, who was more than solicitous to retain Sheridan in his cause, with his usual adroitness, seized upon this as the fitting opportunity to weaken the Whigs by withdrawing from their ranks the most powerful of their members, and enlisting a man whom he conceived to be more than half inclined to Toryism, inasmuch as he had voted on several questions of a public nature independent of party.

Knowing sufficient of the man to entertain a strong doubt of his acquiescence in the proposal, he approached it with great delicacy, tendering him a seat in one of the government boroughs, suggesting at the same time that he should not stand pledged to his support of such measures as he could not approve of. Sheridan listened with attention and decision, confessing himself honoured but not flattered by his Royal Highness's con-

descension, since the kindness of the offer implied a doubt of his political integrity.

"Political folly," returned the Regent, hastily, and with some degree of warmth. "Well, if that is your determination, I shall not attempt to impose upon you restraints troublesome to your conscience; there are matters, however, in which I must require your forbearance, not to assist in the debate on Catholic emancipation; and, knowing our feelings on the subject, not to interest yourself in any way in any question which may be agitated referring to a personage with whom and myself certain differences have and still exist, unless you can warmly sympathise with my feelings and pursue the course I may direct."

"Your Royal Highness may command me," replied Sheridan, with irresistible firmness, "in every thing but in the discharge of my public duties. As a member of Parliament, I cannot deviate from those principles which have been the guide of my conduct in that house; the sacrifice is too great even for friendship;" adding with a smile, "Like the Ethiop, I cannot change the colour of my skin; but," more seriously, returning to the subject, "there is one way in which I may meet your Royal Highness's wishes, and that is, in a future parliament, declining the honour of a seat."

The Prince, startled, expressed his surprise and approbation.

"Do you mean?" was the response.

"I do!" said Sheridan.

"You are a true man of chivalry, Sheridan, and my favour is with you constantly."

The audience was concluded. Sheridan never again entered Carlton House.

They never met; the Regent gave himself up to the indulgence of his passions, which had ripened with his years and obscured the nobler qualities of his mind in those earlier days when it might have been conceived they were less subservient to control, and which, in the midst of his irregularities, furnished the hope of a brilliant future. Surrounded by flatterers too willing to join in his revels and pander to his vicious tastes, Brookes's was abandoned, the merry-makings of the "Salutation" were forgotten, and old friends and associates blotted out of memory.

Sheridan often expressed himself humiliated by the proposals of the Prince, and disgusted with the heartlessness of political intrigue.

Sheridan's political life terminated with the Parliament, which was speedily dissolved.

CHAPTER VIII.

EMBARRASSMENTS INCREASING—OPENING OF NEW DRURY—SHERIDAN, CHALIE, AND THE FOOTPADS—MARRIES MISS OGLE—MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT—IRELAND'S FORGERIES: "VORTIGERN"—THOMAS SHERIDAN JOINED IN MANAGEMENT—THE "CASTLE SPECTRE"—SHERIDAN'S WIT—THE "STRANGER"—"PIZARRO"—AN ADVENTURE—DEATH OF JOHN PALMER.

THE long interval which had elapsed between the destruction of the old theatre and the erection of the new could not but increase the embarrassments of its proprietor, whose sole revenue arose from the operations of the drama. Nor were those embarrassments, limited to those arising from personal expenditure—the cost of the building itself exceeding by many thousands the estimate, together with the interest on the shares (of £150,000 the capital), which had to be paid during the erection, the ground-rent, the purchase of the Killigrew patent, with sundry other items amounting to a sum exceeding £50,000 loss in the three years preceding its opening, which took place on the evening of the 21st day of April, 1794, the theatre being then in a perfectly unfinished state in its exterior construction, although in its interior splendidly adorned, and fitted in an

elegant and classic taste; unrivalled in beauty and effectiveness in every requisite of dramatic exhibition.

It opened with the tragedy of "Macbeth," with John P. Kemble as *Macbeth*, and his sister, the inimitable Siddons, as *Lady Macbeth*, while every character was powerfully sustained by a theatrical corps never equalled on any stage for its numerical strength;—it was the peculiar feature of Kemble's management and the liberality of Sheridan never to omit any amount of expenditure which could give the charm to drama in its perfect resemblance to nature, which it was founded to illustrate, nor to retain in their service performers unequal to its duties. It may not be unworthy of remark that on this night Edmund Kean, the great tragedian, then a mere boy of some eight years, made his first appearance on the boards as one of the blue-devils in the witches scene, so poetically devised, and so masterly illustrative of the great bard, revelling in the realms of fancy, exhausting worlds, and who, in his boundless genius, could then "imagine new."

So great was the excitement on the opening of the theatre that it became crowded to an overflow on the first opening of the doors.

Miss Farren, the most accomplished actress that ever appeared on the boards of a theatre, delivered an address adapted to the purpose, exciting the

enthusiasm of the audience in the means that had been employed in securing the capacious building and the audience from conflagration, very happily illustrated by the exhibition of a massive iron curtain, which on its fall divided the audience from the stage and scenery, thus confining the flames to the department in which it was most probable they would originate. The curtain on being lowered was struck with heavy hammers, in order to prove that it was something more than stage iron, which by its clang reverberated through the house, mingling with the uproarious clamour of a delighted audience.

On its being raised another burst of applause rang from every quarter on the exhibition of a cascade of water rushing down from tanks with which the roof had been supplied, roaring into a huge basin prepared for its reception; dashing, splashing, tumbling over artificial rocks, but leaving no doubt of its own reality, and clearly showing that in such an awful event as that of fire, they could not only extinguish the flame upon the instant, from whetever quarter it could originate, but actually drown the theatre.

It was one of the grandest exhibitions—taken with the performances of the evening, with the incidental music of Matthew Locke, in which all the vocalists of the theatre joined, including Kelly,

Crouch, Dignum, Sedgwick, Mrs. Jordan, and Mrs. Bland—that had ever been presented for public entertainment, or, we may safely add, that ever will.

On the fall of the curtain the audience retired in admirable harmony, delighted and amazed.

Night after night the same performances were repeated, and without any abatement of public interest; by the treasurer's books the house was actually clearing nightly an average of £300.

With all this success, the means were slow in working off so heavy an indebtedness, while the hungry claimants whose terms of credit had expired pressed forward those claims with unusual rigour; whereas, with a little patience, and a wise and prudent disposition of the proceeds in progressive collection, all might have been easily and satisfactorily adjusted.

Sheridan's pecuniary resources, which never failed him under any circumstances, were drawn into requisition, and bonds, and mortgages, and loans were negotiated, to remove the evil of the day, but not to remedy it. The facility with which he could raise the supplies was the root of the embarrassment under which he so constantly laboured; and his unwavering pursuit of the social evil, so to express ourselves, now thoroughly confirmed, together with his habitual negligence

in all monetary matters, as more immediately connected with his personals, increased.

Chalie, the wine-merchant, whom we have already alluded to in a former part of this work, relates an anecdote which we think amusing, while it exhibits his great presence of mind.

Sheridan had entertained the thought of renting a cottage at Putney, and Chalie drove him in his dennet to take a view of the premises. It is possible they had both partaken freely of the bottle, having taken an early dinner at the Swan Inn, Walham Green, and kept to the table until it was dark. On their return home they were stopped by two men, just as they arrived at the dead wall enclosing Sir Henry Wilson's park, at Little Chelsea. One held the horse's head, while the other demanded their money, in coarse but very intelligible terms. Sheridan protested he had no money—"My friend can accommodate you," he said, very calmly; "and for myself, I'll tell you what I can do: I CAN GIVE YOU MY NOTE." Chalie was "cleaned out," to use a vulgar expression. We believe the note was not accepted; and, as these matters are generally conducted in a hurry, the fellows moved off.

We believe we may safely aver for a fact, this to be the first time that a note of hand was ever offered as booty to the knights of the road.

Sheridan, however, felt inclined to reform—in other words, to reform his habits. He had been a widower for four years, and that four years had been wasted in the vain efforts of dissipating his mourning for the greatest domestic affliction—the loss of a wife and child, tenderly if not immoderately beloved. He had captivated the affections of a lady, his junior in years, who had become fascinated with his manners and address, the brilliancy of his name; and, blinded by passion, she could not perceive those traces of dissipation written in legible lines upon his forehead; or, if perceived, inspired with the generous thought that she might draw him back to the domestic hearth which he had deserted.

She had her full share of female loveliness—highly educated, amiable, and tender, and devoted in her attachments. Sheridan was not insensible of her merits; he felt that to woo was to win; he made his proposals, which were accepted, on the condition of a settlement of twenty thousand pounds, in the purchase of an estate of that value, upon her and her issue—the Rev. Dean Ogle, her father, contributing as her dower the sum of five thousand pounds. Sheridan raised the money. Polsden, a fine estate situate near Dorking in the county of Surrey, was for sale; it was

purchased, and the settlement and the marriage consummated.

Moore, in his memoirs, hazards a doubt, an invidious question, as to the legitimacy of the means by which the money was raised to effect this purpose; thus showing how little he was acquainted with the subject on which he treats, or those facts which, upon a very slight inquiry, he might have established. Richard Ironmonger, of Brighton, disposed of the property and became one of the trustees, on the issue of ten debentures or rent-charges of three thousand pounds on the property of the theatre, fifteen thousand pounds of which was appropriated to the purchase, and the balance employed in discharging an equal amount of the incumbrances on that property.

It must be remarked, and may be perceived by reference to dates, that from the death of the first Mrs. Sheridan to his marriage with the second, his pen had ceased its labours, nor could be brought into action by any of those advantages which must have resulted from its occupation. The state of his mind consequently may be easily imagined.

Tranquillized to a certain extent, domesticated as far as such a spirit could be tranquillized, or be domesticated by the beloved partner of his fireside, he turned his thoughts to composi-

tion, to the production of an operatic drama, to be called "The Foresters," a drama which in my opinion, from certain scenes flashing with wit and the keenest satire in that good-humoured epigrammatic style with which his works abound, would have enriched the stage and added to that fame which he had so justly acquired, but which, like all his works, was never actually finished until the evening on which they were announced for performance: it was suffered to remain in the obscurity of the closet.

The literary world had been for some months considerably excited by the reported discovery of an old chest, said to have been the property of the great bard of Avon, and containing two complete tragedies which had never seen the light, namely, "Henry the Second," and "Vortigern and Rowenna," in the handwriting of the bard, William Shakspeare; with numerous papers, comprising a last scene in the tragedy of "King Lear," which had never been presented on the stage, and appeared to be an after-thought of the great poet, one of the nature of a confession of faith, addressed to Anne Hathaway, who afterwards became his wife; together with a lock of his hair, a voluminous correspondence with Sir Walter Raleigh, the Earl of Leicester, and Lord Southampton, master

of the revels to Queen Elizabeth, addressed to William Shakspeare, of the Globe Theatre, commanding his presence with that of his company at the royal Palace of Nonsuch or Theobald's, or whatever palace her Majesty might hold her court at the time and date of the command, &c., &c.

Also certain deeds of conveyance and drafts of agreement with Hemmings, Condel, and others, his principal performers; with such a profuse mass of miscellaneous papers as to remove the possibility of a doubt of their being anything but genuine.

William Henry Ireland, the son of Samuel Ireland, of No. 8, Norfolk Street, in the Strand, well known for his beautiful engravings illustrating his several tours on the River Severn, the Wye, and the Medway and Thames, brought, but was silent on the means by which he procured them,—on the solemn pledge of an oath by which he was bound, as he said, never to reveal the hand from which he received them, the spot on which they had been found, or the place in which the chest had been deposited—slily insinuating at the same time a doubt whether the unknown gentleman had not sufficient reasons for evading inquiry.

A vast amount of these papers was on view in Norfolk Street, Strand, and the curious were invited to their investigation. Old Doctor Parr, a devout admirer of Shakspeare, inspected them,

and satisfied himself of their authenticity; he read the paper called the "Confession of Faith," and pronounced it the work of that master-mind, adding in his enthusiasm: "Our Litany abounds in beauties, our Church is full of them, but here is a man who has outstepped us all in moral teachings and divinity.

Edmund Malone, the able and learned commentator upon Shakspeare, refused to admit, but paused to condemn, contemplating the papers in their vast amount, and staggered by doubts whether it were possible that forgery could be employed in their production. The autographs were perfect: the correspondence, when compared with letters in existence known to be genuine, bore upon their face evidence of authenticity, and he held it impossible that the ingenuity of any man or limited number of men could ever have produced so complicated and so diffuse a fraud; yet his doubts were serious, and the closest investigation was demanded.

John Philip Kemble, the actor and manager of Drury Lane, a man of considerable learning, could not be brought to believe in their authenticity.

Sheridan was silent.

Ireland published a large folio volume of these miscellaneous wonders, at the price of four guineas,

with perfect facsimiles of the manuscripts comprehended within its pages.

The work, although at that enormous price, was sought for with avidity. It contained the "Confession of Faith," the newly discovered last scene of the tragedy of "King Lear," one or two letters of Lord Southampton; with numerous short pieces of manuscript, which might well have been supposed to be random thoughts of the great bard on which he might have set very little value, and in all probability unintentionally preserved in the clearing out of the waste of his closet. Such was the excitement on this extraordinary occasion that Sheridan, with a view to meet the wishes of the public generally for the representation of one or other of the finished plays, made an offer of three hundred pounds a night for the performance of "Vortigern," which was accepted, and it was placed in immediate rehearsal.

"Vortigern" was announced for a first representation on the night of the 2nd of April, 1796, cast with the whole strength of the company, John Kemble in *Vortigern*, and the fascinating Jordan in the Saxon maid, *Rowenna*.

Every box in the theatre had been secured for several days before the evening appointed, and for hours before the doors were opened for admission, the streets were crowded with an anxious

multitude, pressing forward upon each other to witness the first representation of a tragedy from the pen of Shakspeare.

A strong police force, under the direction of the chief magistrate of Bow Street, was assembled to preserve the peace, which in several instances had been broken, and to obtain, if possible, a carriage-way to the box-doors; but that was impossible, and Sheridan had had the precaution to obtain an additional force from the Horse Guards, which was stationed at each of the entrances. Every precaution was taken to secure tranquillity and order.

When the doors were thrown open the rush was tremendous. Happily no accident happened; the arrangements were admirable, by which the pressure from without was effectually resisted, and the ingress of those in front facilitated. In less than ten minutes boards were exhibited in the most exposed places, announcing the fact that the house was crowded to an overflow, and that no more tickets would be issued for any part of the house. Thousands were turned back, but still the streets were crowded by the disappointed, determined, if they could not see, to hear the issue of the performance.

A house so overwhelming is rarely propitious to the author's first night, however it may be

answerable to the purposes of the manager; and on the present occasion furnished no very favourable augury, since there was a great diversity of opinion on the authenticity of the play, and it is believed that many were present to condemn under that influence. Be this as it may, the curtain drew up, silence was obtained, and the play proceeded, obtaining more attention than had been anticipated. Some of the thoughts were Shaksperian, and the characters, although shadowy outlines, bore some resemblance to his pencillings; but the manage of the scene was wiry, and attenuated to a tedious length, sluggishly moving along without incident, and devoid of interest. Patience was exhausted ere the termination of the third act, and clamour drowned the fourth. Kemble was tame and insufferable, and certainly forgetting his duties to the proprietor and the public, contributed his ample share to its condemnation. In the scene where he is wounded, in delivering the line,—

"Death with his icy hand now drags me down,"

he issued it with such a freezing apathy that the cries of "Off, off," became general; and maintaining his ground, determined to die again, if it so pleased the audience to listen to his moanings; for, on silence being restored, he approached the

foot-lights, and addressing the pit, he repeated the line. When the tumult was revived, the curtain fell, and the fate of "Vortigern" was sealed.

We have dwelt on this imposture—which was ultimately confessed to by Ireland, who avowed himself to be the author and sole conspirator—on account of the bold daring of the adventurer, the talent employed, and the unremitting labour with which it had been pursued.

Sheridan was never known to offer his opinion in the matter until after its representation on the stage: he left the public to decide on its merits, and the question of its authenticity, being of opinion that such a mass of papers as had been prepared and produced in support of its claims was more than the labour of one man could have effected, but in a course of years' devotion to the object.

His son, Thomas Sheridan, having attained to his majority, was admitted into the management and into the properties, and we believe his share in the management contributed largely to its prosperity. He was a young man of considerable talents, great vivacity, and but slightly imbued with his father's failings.

In the following year, on the eighth day of April, 1797, Miss Farren retired from the stage, to

assume the coronet as the Countess of Derby. She was unquestionably the most accomplished actress that has ever appeared on the boards of a public theatre, while, in private life, she had sustained herself with that spotless purity and those charms of character qualifying her for the distinguished station she had been called upon to assume. We should scarcely have ventured to allude to the event of her retirement, but for the happy compliment paid her by Sheridan. She was the original *Lady Teazle* of the stage. She had selected the "School for Scandal" for the occasion. When the curtain fell he approached her in the green-room, surrounded by her friends and admirers: raising her hand with some emotion tenderly to his lips, he breathed into her ear,— "God bless you, *Lady Teazle is no more, and the 'School for Scandal' has broke up for the holidays.*" Sheridan was singularly happy in his felicitations, their brevity, and their point.

The same season gave birth to the "Castle Spectre" of Matthew G. Lewis, better known as Monk Lewis, from a very questionable romance under that name, not remarkable either for its morality or its decency, but eminently so for its wide circulation. The "Castle Spectre" possessed no merit but in the novelty of its construction, and introducing on the stage all the wild

flights of a romantic fancy—a tyrant baron, with his emissaries, African slaves, dungeons, daggers, escapes, and—to climax the whole—the spectre of the murdered *Evelina* appearing to her daughter in the oratory of the castle.

The scenery and stage appointments were excellent; the music, by Kelly, pleasing; but the scene of the oratory, with the inimitable acting of Mrs. Jordan, as the heroine, *Angela*, and Mrs. Powel as the *Spectre*, was the crowning point of its great success.

Sheridan was asked the question, why he had desecrated the stage by such an abortion? "Abortion, my dear friend," was the reply; "look to the treasury. I have long entertained the idea of converting 'Romeo and Juliet' into a comic opera; despatching the fiery *Tybalt* with the bravura 'The soldier tired;' *Mercutio* to the lively air of 'Over the hills and far away;' and winding up with a grand scene in the graveyard, with the shade of the *Capulets* dancing among the tombstones to the solemn dirge of 'Where are you going, my pretty maid? I am going a-milking, sir, she said.' Won't it be capital; Lewis's success ensures my own."

Sheridan's satire was broad and keen, but admirably fashioned. On an after-occasion, in the warm discussion of a disputed point, Lewis

offered to bet all that had been made by his "Castle Spectre." "My dear fellow," responded Sheridan, "I'll not take that bet, but I'll bet you all it's worth."

In the season of 1798, March 24th, Sheridan produced his version of the "Stranger" of Kotzebue, which had been translated by Thompson, and adapted by himself to the requirements of the English stage. It was eminently successful, and won upon public favour by the inimitable acting of Kemble as the *Stranger*, and Mrs. Siddons as *Mrs. Haller*.

In the following season he lost his *Joseph Surface* in the death of John Palmer, who, deeply afflicted by the death of his wife and favourite son, expired on the Liverpool stage, August 2nd, 1798, in the part of the *Stranger*, exclaiming—

"O God! O God!
There is another and a better world!"

Sheridan was deeply affected by the event, and contributed one hundred pounds to the relief of his orphan children.

His policy in management was marked with a sound discretion. On being rebuked for not employing his commanding talents to more legitimate purposes than that of adapting foreign sentimentality, with its tinsel embellishments, to

the English stage, he replied, in the lines of Dr. Johnson—

"'The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
And those who live to please must please to live.'

Kotzebue and German sausages are the order of the day."

In the following season, on the 24th day of May, 1799, he produced, in obedience to the prevailing taste, Kotzebue's "Pizarro," with all its gorgeous attirements, which, with the exception of the skeleton employed, he had so clothed with the powers of his pen as to make it his own. It is a fact creating no surprise with those who had rendered themselves familiar with his habits of procrastination, that, on the night of its representation, the close of the last act was written during the performance of the first four, and the parts copied and distributed to the performers in the interval which elapsed between the close of that act and the drawing up of the curtain for the fifth and last.

Strange, with such powers always ready at command, that he should neglect their use until forced by necessity to their exercise!

From these and other causes resulting from the complication of the machinery, not in good working order, the play was not concluded until after

one o'clock in the morning, leaving the curtain to be drawn up for the after-piece.

Never was there a more good-natured audience assembled within the walls of a theatre; its patience and endurance was beyond all former precedent. But it was a Sheridan; the genius of a Sheridan was diffused among them, preserving order and the play from condemnation. No other man would have dared to risk his reputation in so loose and slovenly a manner, or escaped the fate consequent on his temerity, while that fate would have been so well deserved. The acting was excellent, and when the curtain fell three distinct cheers reverberated through every part of the house. The fashion was not of those days of calling the favourites before the curtain to receive the plaudits of the audience; the invidious nuisance disparaging the efforts of minor claimants was then unknown, and better had it been if it never had had birth. "The play was the thing," and the performers were estimated according to the talent they displayed in embodying the conceptions of the author, and speaking his lines as they were written down for their delivery.

"Pizarro" was enacted by a corps unequalled in our more modern days, each in themselves a star, united in a galaxy. Barrymore in *Pizarro*,

Mrs. Siddons in *Elvira*, John Kemble in *Rolla*, his brother Charles Kemble in *Alonzo*, and Mrs. Jordan in *Cora*, Dowton representing the old Peruvian *Orozembo*, Holland sustaining the single scene of the Spanish *Sentinel*, and every other of the characters allotted to a fitting representative. Of those whose names we have enumerated, to remind us of the days when drama in its excellence was deserving of that patronage which was liberally extended to it by a judicious people; when we see it in its decline, we find deficiency the cause, and the question arises, shall we ever see the like again?—we fear never.

"Pizarro," on the first night of its representation, hardly amounted to the quality of a dress rehearsal; still its admirable points were visible amid the defects, endurable from those flashes of genius occasionally gleaming through their haze. But it must be mentioned, without disparagement of the Kembles and their assistants in the scene, that Mrs. Jordan's rendition of *Cora*, in her simplicity and beauty, her devoted love, her friendship, and maternal affections, was the great charm drawing down the sympathies of the audience. The address of *Rolla* to the Peruvians, delivered by Kemble with a masterly energy, will ever remain in record of his eloquence, his loyalty, and his patriotism; it was nightly cheered with enthu-

siasm; it warmed up the affections of a wavering people in troublesome times—it united them; and in its pointed reference to French despotism, and the change of rule which in its daring arrogance it proposed to effect by invasion, bound up the whole country in one solemn bond of loyalty and affection, awakening its jealousies of that foul democracy which disgraced France, staining it with the blood of martyrs to the violation of rule and order.

Too much can hardly be said of this wonder-working play, which spread its influence through the length and breadth of the land, where a theatre could be found; and no theatre could work its way without it.

It was the last of his stage productions, the last and the greatest, considered with reference to its effects on the public mind; for although we cannot estimate it as a whole to any of his former productions, still it bore the unmistakeable impress of his great genius, his loyalty, and affection for that monarchy which had been shorn of its despotic powers by the constitution of 1688, and his devotion to the real interests of his country—and the people unanimously responded to his patriotism.

Such was the feeling aroused by the address of *Rolla* to the Peruvians, in extract from the pub-

lished play, that the following notice was stuck up in the bar-rooms of public-houses, roadside inns, and in provincial taverns and hotels, posted in prominent places, and underlined in large characters—

"No Democrat admitted here!"

The success of "Pizarro," for the copyright of which Ridgway, the bookseller of Piccadilly, gave him two thousand guineas, enriched the treasury of the theatre, and unhappily encouraged his indolence while it should have stimulated his industry.

CHAPTER VIII.

HABITS NOT RESTRAINED — NEW THEATRE — PROSPEROUS AFFAIR WITH STUART—WILSON'S DEBT OF HONOUR—STOPPED BY A FOOTPAD IN HENRIETTA STREET—THE FIFTY POUND NOTE—GUNTER'S BILL—BURNING OF THE THEATRE—SHERIDAN'S FORTITUDE—REBUILT BY COMMITTEE ON SHARES AT THE INSTANCE OF PETER MOORE, SAM. WHITBREAD CHAIRMAN—INDIGNITY OFFERED TO SHERIDAN WITTILY BUT CALMLY RESENTED.

In all things Sheridan was himself alone; having no compeer, finding no parallel. The home which he had secured, and the wife he had selected to adorn it, was, with all her charms and polished manners, not the home or the wife of his first affections; they remained, weakening by comparison the tenderer ties by which he was bound, and when the novelty of his new condition was worn away, returning him to those habits which had been partially restrained: his home wanted that attractive charm which had wooed him even in his dissipations. Without disparagement of the excellent qualities of that amiable lady who had found a place in his affections, in return for her own infatuation, she could not tempt him from those failings which had become constitutional, and which defeated every endearing effort

at control. The harmony of that home was not disturbed by tears, by lamentations, and upbraidings, while the hope of his reclamation was passing away, and yielding to patient endurance and resignation.

He courted society, and found it at Brookes's, St. James' Street, the "Bedford," Covent Garden, and at the "Salutation," of the Widow Butler; his evenings, when otherwise disengaged, found him at one or other of these his most favourite resorts, joining with the gay, mixing in the revel, sportive in wit, lively in fancy, and boyish in frolic. His cares were cast aside with the same ease that he threw off his overcoat, or placed his hat upon the stand; the advance of years had not sobered his pursuit of pleasure, or damped that lightness of heart and singleness of thought which had at all times distinguished him. His skeleton was in his closet, and he left it there, seldom visiting it, only when appetite failed and the aching head reproved.

Money, money was the presiding demon of his day; not in itself a demon, but in its improvident use, and unhappily its abuse: the facility with which he could raise it from day to day, as his necessities pressed upon him, dissipated all caution; the evil day was by its means deferred, while its incumbrances increased with the additional weight of interest and premiums for loans.

The theatre was prosperous, productive, and, with a moderate share of prudence, he might have easily released himself from their incumbrance. His income may be safely computed at fifteen thousand a year, for a period exceeding thirty years, while his actual expenditure—that is, of his household—never exceeded five; the balance was constantly in consumption in the payment of interest and premiums on temporary loans, suits, law costs, and judgments against his property in the theatre, which frequently swept away its receipts, leaving the performers frequently without their salaries.

This account may appear monstrous, incredible, but it is not less the fact. He would give his note or acceptance at any time to his creditor, or for the accommodation of his friend, and would even issue them for discount, without ever receiving the proceeds. His acceptances, although questionable with business men, were always esteemed good by the lawyers, because they ensured a suit, and recovery was certain.

We know of one case, which was not solitary, and which we give in illustration of his extreme thoughtlessness, and that utter negligence in the management of his own affairs.

A man of the name of Stuart had married a pleasing vocalist of the name of Griffiths, formerly

a pupil of Michael Kelly. She was well known to the Dublin stage, and something of a favourite with the audience. Stuart was anxious to procure her an appearance at Drury Lane, and applied to Sheridan for that purpose. Unluckily for the good-natured and indiscreet manager, at one of those interviews a clamorous creditor for a few pounds made his appearance in the hall, vociferously demanding his money, and swearing he would not leave the house without it. Bob Farebrother, who had attended the door, attempted to pacify the man, but failed—the altercation was overheard. Farebrother drew his master aside. "What can I do, Bob?" said Sheridan, excited; "I have not got five pounds in the house—the man must call again, and be paid."

Stuart seized this as a favourable opportunity of gaining his object, by laying Sheridan under an obligation. "If Mr. Sheridan will permit me," he said, "and accept the offer as kindly as it is made; I know how painful it is to be troubled by such men under such circumstances, but I have forty pounds in my pocket which I have no immediate use for, and can freely spare it, if he will give me his note at two months, which will answer my purposes just as well."

Sheridan looked at him with surprise; thought him a good fellow, with an Irish heart and a

strong brogue; the offer was accepted; the man was paid, a stamp sent for, and the note given, accompanied by a note to Michael Kelly, his musical director, to give the lady a hearing, &c.

Stuart was delighted with his success, and took the earliest opportunity of waiting on Kelly with his missive, accompanied by his wife. Kelly received his pupil very graciously; but, upon hearing her pretensions to rank as the first singer of her class—that is, the *prima donna*—a term, by the bye, not then in assumption—he expressed some doubts whether he could receive her on such terms. The lady was confident of a brilliant success—the husband more so; a day was appointed for a trial of her voice upon the boards, it arrived, it was a failure; she was wholly deficient in power, and was consequently informed that he could not in justice to the theatre announce her for an appearance. Stuart was furious, and threatened Sheridan for his forty pounds, adding, "If I don't get it, I'll give him a touch of the Irish blackguard; shure enough he knows what that manes."

Kelly, who was an Irishman himself, but not of the same class, apprized Sheridan of his intentions; who, thoroughly ashamed of having accepted the loan, was prepared for his visit. The money was paid; but Sheridan, with his

usual negligence, forgot the note, which the fellow had paid away. The result was, when it arrived at maturity it was sued upon. Sheridan, with his usual negligence, pocketed the writ which had been served upon him; judgment was obtained against him by default, and execution issued against the theatre for one hundred and seventeen pounds, including sheriffs' fees and sheriffs' poundage.

A most respectable tradesman of the name of Wilson, residing in Piccadilly, held Sheridan's note for two hundred pounds. He was severely pressed for the money, to meet his own engagements; he had repeatedly called upon Sheridan in the hope of receiving payment, scorning to take advantage of his necessities by instituting a suit for recovery. Chance so directed it, he called at a time when Sheridan had a few hundreds laying before him upon the table. "My dear fellow," said Sheridan, with his usual good-natured smile, "don't look that way," pointing to the table; "I have not a pound at command, and really you must wait for a few days longer, when I shall be better circumstanced—that money is devoted to a debt of honour, which you know must be paid."

"A debt of hónour," replied Wilson calmly, drawing the note from his pocket and exhibiting it, then deliberately tearing it up and scattering

its fragments in the fire, adding, "Mr. Sheridan, mine is a debt of honour."

"Yes," replied Sheridan, impetuously, "and must be paid forthwith."

This spontaneous act was in the character of the man. He had lost a bet, for in no other way he gambled, and the money on the table had been raised to redeem it.

When Sheridan offered himself as a candidate for the representation of the city of Westminster, he proposed his son Thomas for Stafford with, as he then thought, the certainty of success.

"Well, Tom," he said, joyously, "when you are elected, what will you do?"

"Do," responded Tom; "I shall not follow your steps, my dear father: if I go to the House I shall have it posted on my hat,—To LET."

"Indeed, Tom; well, that's good; but don't deceive those who may propose to bid for you: be sure to add—UNFURNISHED."

But the event turned out adverse to their hopes; the men of Stafford were not to be turned over from the father, whom they idolized, to the son, of whom they knew nothing.

Tom Sheridan proceeded to Stafford on the canvass, having announced his intentions; and, in the full persuasion that his father's friends would give him their support, proceeded to the

canvass. On arriving within a mile of the borough, he was met by the former partisans of Sheridan, who politely declining the honour of his visit, turned his horses' heads towards London, assuring him that his road lay that way. This was an event which might have been readily anticipated by the reason of Sheridan's own defection. It was now clear that he had lost the borough for ever.

The disappointment was great, for he dearly loved his son, and it was the pride of his ambition to see that son wreathed with the honours of Parliament; but the animal spirits never failed him; since that event—that one event, the loss of his wife, which had overcast the residue of his life, he expressed himself in no terms of anger; but he severely felt the loss of early friends.

It is remarkable that in all his adversities he could never be brought to feel their depression: they were of self-creation, resulting from his self-abandonment, from his incorrigible negligence and the waste of energy in shifting off, by extravagant expedients, the crushing weight which could not but ultimately overwhelm.

But the clouds were gathering: the receipts of the theatre were falling off for the want of novelty, which he had promised to supply by the production of his "Foresters," long talked of, but never

seen. The actors had to be paid, the Court of Chancery was invoked, the receipts of the treasury had been impounded, and his resources in that quarter stringently reduced; but his spirits seem to have upheld through all, and his wit and humour as abundant as ever. His fortitude and presence of mind never failed him, although reduced to expedients which pecuniary difficulties might suggest, but a higher sense of honour would reject.

One night, or rather morning, as he was returning from the "Salutation," not at all improved by the potations he had taken, he was attacked by a ruffian in Tavistock Street, at that hour when it was literally deserted and the watchman was snoring in his box. "Your purse!" demanded the fellow.

"My purse?" returned Sheridan, offering no resistance. "Well, here it is: if you can find anything in it, it is more than I can; therefore, I entreat you, let us go halves in the finding." A step was heard approaching, and Sheridan was relieved, but not before a deadly blow was aimed at his head, which he stopped with great adroitness, and by superior strength of arm, wrenched the weapon from the fellow's grasp, who fled. That bludgeon was long retained as a trophy.

Meeting with the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird one

day, after the usual salutations had passed between them, he gently intimated that he had left his purse at home. "Indeed," said Kinnaird, "that is unfortunate." "I don't know about that," replied Sheridan, "for there was nothing in it." Kinnaird laughed heartily. Sheridan continued: "You don't happen to have left yours at home, I hope; for I seriously want the loan of a ten-pound note." Kinnaird laughed more heartily. Looking over his pocket-book, willing to comply with the request, he said, "I'faith, Sheridan, I have not got one—I have nothing under a fifty."

"A what?" exclaimed Sheridan; "a fifty? Nay, Douglas, you are deceiving me—there is no such a sum in the world—they have departed—it would refresh my memory to look upon one."

Kinnaird placed the note in his hand. "I am satisfied," he cried, gazing upon it most affectionately—"perfectly satisfied." He was about to return it; Kinnaird desired him to fold it up for further use.

Tom Sheridan was similarly circumstanced with his father at times, although infinitely more provident. On one occasion, applying to his father, who in answer to his solicitation said, "I have no money, Tom; no money, so what is to be done? I see no remedy but the road," jokingly—"the

road, Tom—'Stand and deliver;' and if you are fortunate, you may supply us both."

"I tried that last night," returned Tom, retaliating the joke. "I stopped your treasurer, but I found you had been beforehand with me, and robbed him of all he had."

Sheridan, under the notorious embarrassment of the affairs of the theatre, did not find the same facilities in raising the ways and means which had formerly flowed in upon him in such abundance. Bankers were cautious, friends cool and not abundant, lawyers doubted if they obtained a judgment they could obtain the money, and the Jews wanted additional "shecurity."

John Hanson, a wealthy furnishing ironmonger, of Bruton Street, Berkeley Square, was rather a heavy creditor; so was Gunter, the celebrated confectioner, but much smaller in amount of the two. Gunter had sent in his bill, demanding immediate payment, on the morning when Hanson called for the settlement of his own. Gunter's bill lay upon the table. Hanson was pressing, Sheridan equally apologetic.

"But I must have my account settled, Mr. Sheridan," cried the man of iron; "promises are not payment, and I cannot wait any longer."

"Well, my dear sir, if you can show me the way how to settle it, I shall most cheer-

fully comply with your wishes," was the calm reply.

"Me show you," retorted Hanson; "how am I to know your resources?"

"You know Gunter; perhaps you will have no objection to take his bill," said Sheridan, with a merriment in his eye, as the comical thought struck him, while glancing at the paper on the table.

"Not at all; I know Gunter to be a safe, good man."

"Well then," handing the folded paper over to the expectant tradesman, "there's his bill—take it, make what use of it you can, and when you have done with it, I must beg of you to return it receipted;" and bowing politely on quitting the room, he left the bewildered Hanson to the acceptance or rejection of the joke, as might best suit his fancy—he had been too importunate, and he felt it.

It was in the midst of these troubles, which one successful season might have removed, when that dire calamity, the destruction of his theatre, bereaved him of all hope, and left him in an entanglement which could only terminate with his life.

It was announced about 12 o'clock, on the night of the 24th of Feb., 1810, that Drury Lane Theatre

was on fire, and in less than fifteen minutes the whole building in a flame announced its destruction in the wide spreading of its blaze over the entire of the metropolis. Awfully sublime was that terrible conflagration, which no human effort could subdue, which in a few hours converted a most noble pile into a smouldering heap of ruin, which destroyed the fortunes of its proprietor, and threw hundreds of living souls into a despairing state of destitution.

Sheridan was in the House of Commons at the time of the terrible event. Such was the force of its flames, as mounting to the roof it overwhelmed the atmosphere with its glaring light, distinctly to be seen from every quarter, it illumined the entire Commons as though a city were on fire. The members flocked to the windows; the business was suspended out of consideration to the distinguished sufferer; it was moved an adjournment, when Sheridan, addressing the chair, begged that no interruption of the business of the House should be suffered on his account, adding, in a melancholy air, but perfectly calm and composed, "Many honourable gentlemen have at sundry times questioned my independence, which I have at all times preserved —but let that matter rest; whatever may have been their opinions, the evidence is complete.

My independence is established, I have nothing now left to depend upon;" and immediately quitting the House, he proceeded to the calamitous scene. All of the principal actors were there assembled in groups, exhibiting the utmost dismay and terror. Sheridan was among them, and every effort was being made to save a something from the devouring element, in vain. The flame had spread through the whole entire of the theatre, every window was vomiting forth dense volumes of smoke and flame, and the walls were streaming with the liquid metal from the roof, the gutters, and the pipes, which the surpassing heat had molten. On the roof had been erected in a commanding position, which might be seen for miles around, the colossal figure of Apollo—the fire bursting from every aperture through which it could force its way, rolling onward like the waves of the ocean, now swelling in the tempest of their rage, and now creeping forward, devouring their way to the pedestal on which the gigantic figure was erected. It was a moment of painful suspense—the firemen could do nothing—the turning on of the stream of water in its volume from the New River could scarcely have arrested even for a moment the widely spread flames in their wild volcanic rage.

The colossal figure of Apollo tottered on its

base, the spiral flame encircling it—it shook, it trembled, it fell, with a thundering crash engulfing the whole of the roof. The shock was awful, loud and reverberating like the discharge of a whole park of artillery; nor were the hideous yells of the collective masses less appalling than the fall of this noble structure. The morning broke upon the still blazing smouldering mass—a shapeless ruin.

Sheridan had left the scene during the height of the conflagration, musing and serious. Kelly followed him to the "Bedford," where he was discovered sitting over his wine, which he was swallowing by the tumblerful in a total state of abstraction.

"Good heavens!" cried Kelly, approaching him. "Is it possible, Mr. Sheridan, you can be sitting here calmly and collectedly taking your wine under so heavy a calamity?"

Sheridan looked up with a sad and serious smile, and, shaking him by the hand, replied, "Well, Mike, what do you see to reprove? surely *a man may take his wine by his own fireside?*"

Mike was provoked by the witty reply, which he thought at the moment betrayed a proper want of feeling. Not so Sheridan; from that night he exhibited a total loss of all his former energies; sunk within himself, he made little or no effort

at re-erecting the theatre or defining any mode of raising a capital for that purpose; he no longer courted that society of which he had been so long the chief ornament—his invitations were not less numerous, but his acceptance more limited; his conversation lively as ever, his wit as sparkling, but, it was observable, indulged in with something like a caustic severity not in keeping with that amiability which had so eminently distinguished him as the good-natured man. He was nervous, but not irritable; his generous sympathies were easily excited, and he felt for other's woes as keenly, no doubt, as in secret he felt his own; but his pride, his indomitable pride, would never suffer him to reveal the worm gnawing at his heart.

Peter Moore, M.P. for Coventry—honest Peter, as he was called, from his inflexible integrity—the firmly-attached friend of Sheridan, took up that cause which he had in his inertness kept in abeyance, and, with an energy creditable to his head and heart, arranged a meeting at his own house in Great George Street, for the purpose of receiving the estimates for the rebuilding the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, and for adopting such measures as might be approved of by the said meeting.

A most numerous attendance responded to the

circular of Peter Moore, of the high and influential patrons of the classic drama. At this meeting it was clearly proved that Sheridan's loss amounted to about £150,000, the value of the property as it stood being upwards of £300,000.

It does not fall within our views to report the proceedings of the several meetings which ensued. Sheridan and his son, who had become associated with his father, sold and assigned their interests for a sum of £60,000, in the proportions of £40,000 to Sheridan, and £20,000 to his son Thomas, to be paid out of the last instalments of the new proprietary; and on the completion of the building, with the due execution of the conveyance, Sheridan ceased his connection with theatrical property. So in the year 1813, on the dissolution of Parliament, with politics and the party with which he had been united for a period of thirty-three years! retaining his political integrity unimpeached; leaving, on his retirement, an enduring record of his commanding powers—never excelled, and rarely equalled; a patriot in all his views, a reformer in its true sense—in the spirit of the constitution.

His retirement into private life was little calculated to abate those habits he had formed, and it was evident to those who were immediately about his person that his constitution was yielding to

those unhappy causes which had materially contributed to his pecuniary difficulties; nor were the harassments which he had borne with such patience and endurance lessened in the least, but rather aggravated by his exposure to those legal processes from which as a member of the House of Commons he had been exempt.

Prudence, not at any time his guide, still had no influence over his conduct. Peter Moore, who was his most sincere friend, proposed a compromise with his creditors, and a division of his funds in proportion to the several claims against him and the funds at his disposal. He rejected the proposal as prejudicial to his honour. "My creditors must be paid in the full of their demand," was his reply, "and my pen will yet supply the means."

Samuel Whitbread, M.P., was elected chairman of the general committee of Drury Lane, and also chairman of the committee of management, and vested with such powers as enabled him to pay off in whole or in part Sheridan's claim under the distressing circumstances of his case,—pressed by his creditors, oppressed by lawyers and the sheriff!

Whitbread was immoveable; and before the period came round for its payment under stipulation, Sheridan had, obedient to necessity, so

divided and subdivided it as to leave but a small remainder for his own personal use and the unsatisfied claims still holding out against him.

This conduct on the part of the chairman, to speak in the mildest terms, was arbitrary, if not cruel; and coming from such a quarter, so little anticipated, was sensitively felt, and painfully embittered his feelings: but his health was failing, his infirmities were gathering about him, evident in the faltering step, pursued with the cautiousness characteristic of old age, brought on by forced means, precipitated by imprudence.

We shall forbear to trace him through the last stages of his decline—never greater in the noble qualities of mind than in his fall, still towering in its strength while battling with adversity. Alone—alone, as it were, in the busy scenes of life and a society from which he had withdrawn—his genius lost nothing of its vigour, his wit nothing of its former brilliancy. Tranquillity could scarcely be looked for in the terrible change which had taken place in his financial matters, and the difficulties he encountered in the arrangement of his debts; still no sign was traceable upon his countenance—his fortitude never forsook him—he bore all with a benignant cheerfulness, and submitted himself to every sacrifice in settlement with his creditors.

His biographers, who knew him only in his works, and reviewed him with faint praise in those cases where it would have been dangerous to their own reputation to condemn, have wantonly charged him, in the decline of his days, of sinking into low habits and low associations. Unhappily, his habits were the same—unchanged for all time; his associations, although limited, contracted within a very narrow sphere, continued with him up to the period when failing health confined him to the circuit of his own chamber, and the visitations of his physician Dr. Bain, with the occasional droppings-in of the always welcome Peter Moore. No man had a greater distaste for low and vulgar society than Sheridan; still, if Mr. Thomas Moore, the pensioner of the Marquis of Lansdowne, and the political intriguer Watkins, with some other blind aspirant for a libellous notoriety, hold the Earl of Essex, Lord Melbourne, the Lambs and the Kinnairds, the Bessboroughs, Lord Byron, and Samuel Rogers, low associations, we shall plead guilty to the charge, for they were indulged in to the last; while Brookes's and the "Bedford," *cum multis aliis*, were abandoned. We repeat, no man (with the exceptions quoted) had a greater distaste for vulgar associations than Sheridan: mild, amiable, and singularly courteous in demeanour, he never betrayed pride in its

condescension, or assumed any superiority of rank and condition over those of humbler station, with whom he occasionally came in contact; but here his association commenced and ended.

He never visited the new theatre, which had been erected by a committee of proprietors, although frequently solicited by his friends and urged by Peter Moore. Wounded in pride, but not humbled, he disdained the acceptance of a free admission, as deliberately insulting to its former proprietor. When he made purchase of David Garrick's interest, although no stipulation had been made, or even suggested to that effect, he voluntarily tendered a private box for his family, which was accepted in the same courteous manner in which it had been tendered, and was continued for the exclusive use of Mrs. Garrick until the destruction of that ill-fated property by fire. That the same courtesy should not have been extended to himself, he considered an insult in the degrading tender of a free admission; and it was considered by his friends and admirers—comprising the entire public—a stain and disgrace upon committee of management which was never effaced; but Whitbread assumed the entire management, the sole control and direction of its affairs; and, in the gratification of a miserable vanity and a pitiable *pique* on the genius and

ability which he affected to hold in very moderate estimation, displayed his folly in his ambition and his weakness in his jealousy. The name of Sheridan was so intimately interwoven with the fortunes of Drury Lane Theatre, that it must have been of the greatest importance to the proprietary to have held together their connection. Had he been invited to become an honorary member of the management, assisting by his advice in the direction of its affairs, he would have proved a host, if only by the influence of his name. As it was, the ruin of the property was predicated in the inauguration of the first committee, and the slights which had been shown him precipitated its fall, in the arrest of public confidence, and consequently in the withdrawal of public support. The high dictatorial tone and lofty bearing of Samuel Whitbread, Esq., M.P., and a member of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, excited the derision rather than the respect of the finest dramatic *corps* ever assembled together on the boards of a public theatre, who felt that the theatre was as much indebted to them for their services as they were to the theatre in affording them the arena for the display of their commanding and highly appreciated talents.

"The noodles and doodles," said Sheridan,

when the subject of mismanagement was under discussion, "will have their day, until some amorous tom-cat shall pour forth his tender strains in the deserted gallery to his lady-love kittening in the pit."

"Not so," replied George Robins, the auctioneer, jocosely; "I shall bring it to the hammer before that."

The prediction of Sheridan was verified in the result. Whitbread's mismanagement involved the theatre in inextricable difficulties. Of his death we shall say no more than, at a meeting of the proprietors, held in the saloon of the theatre the same year, recording the death of Sheridan, on the *exposé* of its affairs, Whitbread left the theatre, irritated and indignant; in less than two hours his seat in the Commons House of Parliament was vacant, and the theatre, with its heavy incumbrances, was left to the guidance of other hands. Peter Moore was elected to the chair of the committee, who, with my highly-esteemed friend, Col. Patrick Douglas, took upon themselves the management. It was then I joined with them in the direction of its affairs, and continued with them in discharge of its duties until it was finally resolved to lease the theatre to the highest bidder, reserving the question of competency.

I may mention it as a fact, by the way, and deserving of managerial attention, that I entered into an engagement with R. W. Elliston, in the latter part of the last season of committee management, to play three nights a week on the off-nights of Edmund Kean; Elliston to share with the management all above the average receipts of the season up to that time. The average amounted to £205 nightly. It was considered a good engagement for both parties. Elliston made his first appearance in his favourite part of *Rover*, in the comedy of "Wild Oats." The comedy was cast with the whole strength of an unequalled company of sterling comedians, and wholly failed in its attraction, not producing the average; nor could Elliston's utmost efforts bring up the receipts to a remunerating amount. After a few nights the engagement was cancelled, and he took a benefit, when "Wild Oats" was repeated to an overwhelming house!

On the leasing of the theatre Elliston became the successful candidate, and during the first season of his management, "Wild Oats" was repeated one night in each week, and never failed to draw a full house! Nor was there any change in the cast of the piece, no additional attraction to draw public attention; it was the same identical company, enlisted under the banner of an Elliston,

which had wasted its energies under the management of an unpopular committee. We may glean from these facts the contemptuous expression of public opinion opposed to the rule of a committee which had driven from its counsels a Sheridan, the most popular manager that had ever ruled the destinies of a classic stage since the days of a Garrick.

Towards the close of the year 1815, the Earl of Essex, at a dinner-party given at his house, proposed to Sheridan to accompany him to the theatre, in order to witness from his own private box the masterly performance of Edmund Kean in the character of *Othello*. Though he reluctantly consented to the earl's proposal, he sat, through the last three acts of the performance, testifying to the extraordinary powers of that most extraordinary man. On the fall of the curtain Sheridan was missing from the box; he had crept out unperceived, and some surprise was manifested at his absence. He was sought, and found in the crowded green-room of the theatre, surrounded by the actors and the *employés*, down to the stage-sweeper, enthusiastically pressing forward to catch his benevolent smile, and cheered with the hope that they should see him again piloting the stage out of the shoals and quicksands of mismanagement. It was a glorious triumph in the presence

of several of the committee, who shrank from the rebuke, hearty old Peter Moore alone joining in the manifestations of the delighted group. Sheridan never appeared more at home, or more happy—his was indeed a triumph. Lord Essex, entering the green-room, arm-in-arm with George Lamb, whispered, "Whitbread has made a great mistake."

Sheridan shook hands cordially with all, even with the lamplighter, who blessed his old master with uncommon fervour. Sheridan smiled, saying, "Well, Timpson, I am glad to see you here—an old servant, eh, Timpson?"

"Why you see, your honour, that's no account. I have a vote for Bedford, and that's all about it. All the old hands are discharged that hadn't a vote for Bedford, so now we musters pretty strong in that quarter," was the reply.

"And that's your qualification?"

"Just so, your honour."

It was perfectly notorious that Whitbread had filled every office at his disposal in the theatre with the out-voters of the borough of Bedford—"A positive guarantee," said Sheridan, "of his sincerity in the great popular cause of parliamentary reform—the freedom of voters."

There can be no doubt Sheridan had incurred the displeasure of the aspiring chairman, who had

entered the court of the muses, and ventured his inspired pen in competition for the prize to be awarded to the author of the best address for the opening of the new theatre under his direction. Unhappily, Whitbread's talented performance was rejected by the judges appointed to sit in judgment in the court of Apollo, together with an immense variety of similar lucubrations, and the pen of Byron was solicited to the purpose. It was at a dinner at Rogers', that on the matter being discussed, Sheridan observed that "All the addresses alluded to the new pile as arising like a phœnix out of the fire; but," said he, "Whitbread eclipsed them all in the fertility of his genius; he made more of this bird than all of them put together; he entered into true ornithological particulars, and described his wings, beak, tail, &c.—in short, it was a poulterer's description of a phœnix." This was a joke not to be forgiven; Lord Byron considered it "capital."

One of the best things I think I ever heard fall from the lips of Sheridan, was on the occasion of our meeting, in Pall Mall, with a young gentleman, the son of a distinguished member of Parliament, who had recently entered into the bonds of matrimony with a lady much more distinguished for her beauty than her virtue, and who had obtained a not very enviable notoriety,

for the variety and extent of her amours. Sheridan held him cordially by the hand: "My dear boy," he said, "I am heartily glad to see you, although I think, under circumstances, a visit to the Continent will be better for your health than the troublesome atmosphere of the metropolis."

"My dear Sir, what do you mean? My health was never better."

"Why, they say you have been labouring under a high fever, and in its excitement you have done what you ought not to have done."

"Mr. Sheridan!"

"Why don't you know, you young dog, that it is contrary to the statute to enclose a common without an Act of Parliament!"

Something of this sort was said by Tom Sheridan, who upon being reproved by his father for casting off a female whom it was reported he had deceived, promptly replied,—

"Oh, no, father, I have been much wronged by the accusation; I was merely a tenant at will, gave regular notice to quit, and vacated accordingly; besides which, I would have you believe me, I have too great a regard for the common rights of society to adopt the enclosing system."

Thomas Sheridan was not much less witty than his father, and admirably endowed with many amiable traits of character. Delicate in consti-

tution, he had very early exhibited that fatal malady which had deprived him of his mother in his youth and extinguished the whole Linley family. Accompanied by his lovely and accomplished wife, he sought the mild climate of Madeira for relief, and was at the time of his father's death domiciled for the same purpose at the Cape of Good Hope. It was a great grief to Sheridan, this painful separation, at the time when his own health was failing, and he was anxiously inquiring about the arrival of the Cape packets to bring tidings of that much-loved son, and found himself a solitary in his own chamber.

It is impossible to imagine a closer sympathy between father and son than that which existed between the Sheridans. They lived in each other in an undying attachment, and in the pride of the talent, the unexampled genius of each. Thomas Sheridan, if he did not exhibit that brilliance of thought, that quickness of perception, which so singularly distinguished his sire, was not the less remarkable for the playfulness of his wit and his vast conversational powers. No man was ever more universally esteemed and admired; his presence enlivened wherever he was found. We have met him in the most distinguished fashionable circles, where, on the announcement of his name by the servant in waiting, the delighted

exclamation has burst forth from beauty in its youth and in its meridian: "Here comes Tom Sheridan!" Such was the charm of his fluent wit, the easy grace of his deportment, and the *négligé* elegance with which he entered into the spirit of the "at-homes" of the gay world, that his presence infused a lifefulness into the circle by which he became surrounded, and elevated him beyond all rivalry, even amongst the most accomplished and elegant of the youth of the Court nobility. Sheridan's loss was great when he lost the society of his amiable son, and severely felt at that period, when isolated from the world by inability in joining in its gaieties, he most needed his filial duties and attentions; nor was this painful feeling limited to the one consideration only, but extended itself to that still more absorbing question of health and life. An insidious disease had torn from him all he had really loved: was it now to wrest from him the last of his family?—to render the young mother in her bloom a widow, her children orphans? These were afflicting thoughts that pressed upon him, even in his cheerfulness, and that disturbed his dreams.

He should not have married a second time, with a memory so keen and a heart so devoted to its first affections. Miss Ogle had many charms, was enthusiastic in her attachment; dazzled by

his superior attainments, and in admiration of his many amiable qualities; and that he entertained for her the same sentiments can be scarcely questioned; but their marriage was a great error—her infatuation soon yielded to habits over which she could exercise no controlling power.

Mild, amiable, and enduring while the charm was dissolving which had tempted her to her union with the man she had enthusiastically admired, she was wholly deficient of the means of retaining his affections: too placid, too loving, too tender; too meek and submissive in deportment, hers was the very opposite of the soul-inspired woman with whom she suffered in comparison; and her husband's memory would involuntarily fly back to the one, the only one whose name was engraven upon his heart. It was by comparison she suffered, and not by any deficiency in the ordinary means of securing their domestic comforts. Sheridan was not insensible to her many amiable qualities, and it was not in his nature but to admire them and return her affections with a genial warmth. All was harmony at home; though a tranquil, soft, and uninspired sweetness, light and languishing, was unsuited to that volatile spirit which could not endure to be becalmed, but seeking in its aspirations a higher current, flowing more congenially with

his active spirit. Abroad, where the wine sparkled and the wit brightened, home was forgotten, and only sought when a sated appetite required its repose. The marriage was not a happy one, and the interference of the lady's friends was not at all calculated to improve the state of things; altogether, they were ill suited to each other. Sheridan's society was widely sought, and at home he had little to wean him from his inclinations,—having but one child by his second marriage, a son, Charles, who, reared under the guidance of his mother, had little intercourse with his father in his latter days.

It was evident to those more immediately about his person, who saw him in his nightgown and slippers, that his constitution, naturally robust, was yielding to the inroads of indulgence and to those mental disturbances arising out of his pecuniary difficulties. It was in vain he attempted to conceal the apprehension he was constantly labouring under of some new difficulty with reference to his personal liberty; his pride would not permit him to admit the fact, and his independent spirit could not submit itself to *solicit* those aids which, if freely offered, were feelingly accepted. He had been more than once within the last year of his life subjected to confinement under arrest, from which, in each instance, he had been relieved

by his warm friends, Michael Angelo Taylor and Peter Moore. On the last occasion he was taken out of the house of an officer of the name of Hurst, in Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane, when Peter Moore, with that warmth of heart and deep interest for his friend which characterised his conduct through life, decided on a thorough investigation of his affairs, with a view to affording him that permanent relief from embarrassment repressing his energies and incumbering his mind. A close and minute inquiry was instituted, and it was found that his indebtedness, which had been magnified to an enormous amount, scarcely *exceeded four per cent. on the loss he had sustained by the burning of his theatre.* His debts were a little over four thousand pounds, scattered about in small sums to numerous little creditors. This, the actual state of his affairs, appeared incredible; but was vouched for as the fact by Peter Moore and his coadjutor in the investigation. A plan was devised for their liquidation by that unfailing friend; but such was the inflexible will of Sheridan of overcoming his difficulties by his own means, he could not be brought to what he considered the sacrifice of his independence, by leaning for support on voluntary aids. He had long contemplated the production of a drama under the title of "The Foresters," in which he had made

considerable progress; and on this and the future efforts of his pen he placed considerable reliance. What became of the unfinished manuscript of "The Foresters," is involved in mystery. Mr. Moore discovered, among his papers, fragmentary pieces, loose scraps, such as first thoughts, materials to be wrought up, and worked into the body of the play, but no play; whereas we have seen and read the two first acts entire, abounding in interest, sparkling with wit and liveliness of satire. Some idea may be formed of his design and the construction of his plot from the imperfect sketches which Mr. Moore has given to the public, and we think unfairly, in evidence of the labour employed in pruning and preparing his first thoughts in fitting language. The contrary was the fact, for Sheridan could not endure the fatigue of correction and revision. The design was novel, the development of the scene natural, threading out the plot with many startling effects, highly wrought and of great artistic skill. In its construction, adapting itself to public taste, while it combined the keenest wit with admirable satire and the exciting glow of the great masters of the Elizabethan age, rich in imagery and redolent in beauties, it displayed powers peculiar to the pen that wrought it. It was Sheridan in every line, yet in its construction was unlike any-

thing he had ever written. Is it possible that the manuscript can have been lost or destroyed, and that all that is left to us are the mere fragments of its skeleton, with the loose scraps on which first thoughts were dotted down, and no other evidence is left of its existence?

The winter of 1815-16 was drawing to a close, when Sheridan, who paid as little attention to his health as to his monetary matters, felt himself under the necessity of "laying up," as he termed it, to recruit a strength which he found failing. We had observed for some time that he was incapable of much exertion, and that even the fatigue of passing up and down stairs was too much for him. It had been a severe winter—severe to him in trials which would have bowed down the strongest mind, and bent it to the blighting pressure of adversity; but it was in the elasticity of that mind that it never yielded itself to depression. The friends who had basked in the sunshine of his days had withdrawn from him, and he was alone, but no complaint fell from his lips, and no thought of the world's unkindness disturbed his habitual cheerfulness; still it was too evident that he was struggling with efforts in the suppression of his feelings. Pride, and pride alone, sustained him; that indomitable pride and sternness of resolution which could

struggle and endure without exhibiting any apparent emotion: he was never greater than in his fall.

There was no man in our day like unto the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the poet and the politician, the dramatist and the senator, the manager of a theatre and member of the Privy Council in advisement of the Crown: in all excelling. Of a ripe genius, rich, varied, and exuberant; courteous, affable, and unassuming; graceful in person, his countenance benignant in its expression, his soul beaming through his eyes; benevolently sensitive, highly polished in manners and address; dignified, if we may be so allowed to express ourselves, without dignity in its formal stiffness,—he was the perfect personification of the easy English gentleman in all his mellowness; and we viewed him in the wreck, in the decay of all that in him was mortal, while the mind remained as pure in its brightness as when he moved among his contemporaries, the alluring light—fascinating alike the man of leisure and the man of thrift, the thoughtless and the gay, the student and the professor, the courtier, the politician, and the statesman.

We spent most of our evenings with him in his decadence, while the insidious disease was

slowly creeping on that was to take him from us for ever—himself unconscious of its advances, or, if conscious, awaiting the end with a surprising cheerfulness even under suffering. Stimulants were necessary to him, and he partook of them neither sparingly nor abundantly. Dr. Bain, one of the most eminent physicians of the day, regulated their administration, and we rarely remarked an instance wherein the prescribed bounds were trespassed upon. It is true those bounds were not contracted within a very limited sphere, simply restraining from an over-indulgence.

It was on those evenings, enlivened with his wit, which had lost nothing of its brilliancy, that he would occasionally possess us of his reminiscences, and with his friend Peter Moore, who frequently joined us in the little circle of his chamber, enter into a review of the political questions of past days. Peter Moore, the representative of the city of Coventry, was a true Whig and consistent reformer. On one occasion, when the great question of reform was under discussion between them, Sheridan remarked, with his usual vivacity, "Keep to reform, Peter; it is the only true standard to catch an open constituency, and will never lose its weight with the people. Without reform endorsed on their banners, candidates would stand little chance of

securing their election. Reform, Peter, reform; without reform there would be no excitement. All parties profess to be reformists, but no one can agree upon the terms; nevertheless it burns with patriotism, or at least with a show of patriotism, and that will do as well. Fox was a reformer, Pitt was a reformer; but my friend Charles [Duke of Norfolk] had sixteen members in his pocket on the Whig side of the House, and Pitt as many more on the Treasury benches; and I believe it would be difficult to make either of the parties believe that any reform which should interfere with their patronage would be wholesome. Reform is a capital bait to fish for gudgeons."

"Your remarks," replied Peter Moore, "would leave me in doubt of your sincerity in the cause which you have always advocated."

"My coat is of the same colour; it has never changed or faded since I first assumed it, but I have not found among the champions of freedom any one inclined to the livery I wear. I have always advocated substantial reform: reform in state, economy in government, the abolition of sinecures—of all monopolies, and a rigid guard against wasteful expenditure of the public moneys: these, with a few other items, constitute the reform needed, and which it is expected of

Parliament to amend. The necessity of reform is conceded by all—Whig, Tory, and Radical members; but parties cannot agree on the means, or rather are but ill disposed, Peter, to agree upon the settlement of a question which, so long as it continues in agitation, secures them in their seats under the patronage which has placed them there. To these ends I have been a reformer; but I have lived long enough to know, they can never be attained so long as the Commons House is divided into knots, or partisans of wild and impracticable theories, conflicting with each other, alike dangerous to the constitutional Crown and the constitutional rights of the subject. I have been opposed to universal suffrage as placing a sword in the hands of the people which they might use against themselves. I have advocated annual parliaments as an experiment in rendering bribery and corruption in our elections too costly an adventure to be continued in practice. I have been for a full, fair, and free representation of the people in our Commons House of Parliament, so equally balanced and adjusted to the agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing interests of the nation, that it should become the bond of their union in the great matters of state policy, by an equal division of their power as the best preservative of the true interests of all.

Sir, I would have, in order to the attainment of this great and desirable end, an equal distribution of the elective franchise throughout the length and breadth of the realm, and an equal distribution of the entire representative system among the classes. I never proposed to disturb the borough system by disfranchisement, but rather to extend the right of suffrage to adjacencies, excepting in such cases as that of Cornwall, which returns more than double the number of members to the House than the largest and most populous counties of the kingdom. My opinion has always been in favour of a division of the country into electoral districts, in which population should be alone considered—giving to every householder a vote for the district, and to every freeholder a vote for the county. I would have no limitation; for, in my opinion, the humblest man, who by honest industry has obtained for himself a stake to defend, has equal rights with the proudest peer, and has an equal right to a voice in our public affairs.

"We can have no better guardian of our popular institutions than the man who, by his industry, has acquired a position in a thoroughly organized state of society; but my views have not been limited to these as the only means of attaining the great end of parliamentary reform. In my

mind no man should be qualified as a candidate for any county, city, or borough who was not an actual resident of the said county; for although each member elect is a representative of the country at large, still there are local interests which demand his actual localization, independent of the greater security to be found in his local character."

Peter Moore smiled; Sheridan continued: "Well, I know you think my scheme utopian, and I think so too; no matter, it will never be adopted, there are too many interests opposed to its consummation."

Moore remarked on the candidacy of lawyers, and that they were not provided for in the proposed scheme of reform.

"I' faith, Peter," Sheridan replied, "we have too much law and too little wisdom; still I have no objection to a moderate sprinkling of law upon our benches, but I would limit the seats of lawyers to the two universities; and if that is not enough to satisfy the demand, I would grant a new charter to our Inns of Court, by which they might appear by their representatives in the Commons House of Parliament, gowned and wigged in fitting suit as becomes the members of the *Inferno*."

"What is to become of the army and navy—are

they to have no place in your elaborate scheme?" inquired Moore, affecting great gravity, at the same time strongly impressed with the soundness—although, as he expressed himself, the utter impracticability of so thorough a reform.

"They should be represented by members elected out of their own body," was the reply.

"Well, there is no patchwork in your proposals."

"Patchwork! no, no patchwork, Peter; the house must be pulled down to be rebuilt, and happy will it be for the country if its reconstruction should be allowed to take place without exciting the disorder which must result from the organization of mobocracy. Reform should never be allowed to become the offspring of intimidation."

Sheridan seldom went abroad during the brief period preceding that which was to wholly exclude him from mixing with society, and only then when air and slight exercise were deemed essential by his medical adviser. Strange, but even then, when descending the stairs or entering the carriage for an airing, he had a joke at the expense of his infirmities. His appetite, which had never been very keen, was fast failing him, and even his favourite claret was rejected; still appearances were not of that serious character to excite any

apprehension of danger; he did not himself appear to be conscious of any; and his medical attendants indulged the hope that the passing summer months, with a proper attention to diet, might have their sanitary influence. The mind was healthful, at all times cheerful, never drooping.

The month of May was closing, and although hope could not justify itself in the appearance of any favourable symptoms, still no change had taken place occasioning alarm. His spirits were buoyant, his thoughts bright, and his conversation fluent and easy. The eighth day of June was the last on which he ever left his room. He had been for a carriage-drive, and on his return exhibited a more than ordinary amount of fatigue. He had met with several friends, and had been at White's, and with his accustomed vivacity exerted himself beyond his powers. Peter Moore looked in in the evening, but by the advice of Dr. Bailey and Dr. Bain, retired. Sheridan was too much indisposed even to receive his most favoured visitants, and it must be remarked, during the whole period of his indisposition, he invariably shunned all intercourse with unbidden guests.

On the following day, his spirits never failing him, he rose seemingly refreshed, but with little or no appetite, and in the evening resumed his accustomed seat, and received his usual visitants,

with the same cheerfulness he had exhibited in health. He rallied Bain on medicaments and his copartnership with the undertaker, and talked politics with Moore, then launched into the investigation of the sublime and beautiful, with all the richness of fancy, alternating the "grave and the gay with the lively and severe," with an exuberance of thought and a felicity of language and expression equalled only by himself in the brighter days of his intellectual vigour. We had never known him more discursive, and never beheld him with more pleasure in that happy development of a frank and easy temperament, of a mind, if we may be so permitted to use the expression, which was tranquil in its buoyancy. He had never indulged in the dark side of the picture of human life in his own contemplations; with him all was sunshine, while the shadows were gathering around, obscuring his fortunes and involving his destiny. He seemed happy, he was happy; no cross thought thwarted the social harmony of that memorable evening, for it was the last which his distressing malady permitted him to enjoy; it was the outpouring of the soul, the expiring notes, which, like the singing of the swan, heralded its own funeral.

In the discussions of the evening, the name of Dr. Samuel Johnson had been introduced in the

matter of his Toryism, and his celebrated pamphlet, "Taxation no Tyranny." At the time of its publication it was celebrated, but short-lived, and only since remembered as a melancholy evidence of political apostasy. Sheridan was remarkably animated in his remarks on the merits of the great lexicographer, and probably in the opinion of the many unwarrantably severe.

"He was the Gog and Magog, sir, of the drivelling press—the bookseller's Goliath, who fed him with arms and ammunition, and held him up as a sign at their doorposts, for public worship. He was a giant wielding the hammer of a cyclops, with a giant's humour in the prostration of the victim which he had devoted as his prey. On the publication of his pamphlet, 'Taxation no Tyranny,' I felt like David with my stone in the sling, and have ever since regretted that I suffered myself to be restrained by my friend Fox, in meeting him on his own ground. He was a monster, Peter, much overrated in his strength; a monster with a leadened eye and lumbered brain of Greek and Latin lore, stored without order in cobwebbed mustiness, in an obtuse cranium, impenetrable as the shell of the crocodile. He had great talent, but little genius; but what he lacked in these he made up in a labour which genius would have spurned. He was an egotist

of the superlative order, and surrounded by his imps of the ink-ball, his servitors and self-rendered slaves, he taught himself to believe that he was the Jupiter Tonans of the press, and the wily booksellers, Cave, Doddsley, and Tonson, who were filling their caps by indulging the delusion, cheerfully sustained him in this partial intoxication, by all those aids which the press could render and venal pens endorse.

"He was a man of no principle and of no truth, if we are to judge of him between his precepts and his practice; his piety on the one hand, which was limited to his closet, and his coarse and vulgar revellings with night-brawlers and sottish sensualists on the other. He was the founder of a club of pigeon butchers and mutton merchants in Ave Maria Lane, whose carousals he joined in, disturbing the neighbourhood after midnight with their hideous howlings. He was the associate of the convicted assassin Savage, whom he eulogised; and the companion of the dissolute Beauclerk and Frampton, whose wild pranks he freely indulged in; but there was no fun in him, Peter, no fun; why, we have it upon the authority of Boswell himself, that he did these things while he was affecting piety and prayer, and deceiving the poor old woman his mother by saint-like letters of filial love and duty.

Fancy him stretched upon a tombstone in a churchyard, during divine service, when Beauclerk likened him to Hogarth's 'Idle Apprentice;' or listening to the keen reproof of the same lively wag, upon his obtaining his pension, who addressed him in the language of Falstaff, saying, satirically, 'I hope you'll now purge, and live cleanly like a gentleman.' Sir, I quote Boswell for my authority, I have him before me—here is his life of the frolicking philosopher," taking up Boswell's Johnson, and reading—

"One night, when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining probably that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good-humour agreed to their proposal, '*What, is it you, you dogs? I'll have a frisk with you.*' He was soon dressed, and they sallied forth together into Covent Garden, where the fruiterers and greengrocers were begin-

ning to arrange their hampers just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them, but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while, in joyous contempt of sleep from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,—

> 'Short, oh short then be thy reign,
> And give us to the world again.'

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, and took a boat and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they *resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest* of the day; but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him, for 'leaving his social friends to go and sit with a set of wretched, un-idea'd girls.' Garrick, being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, 'I heard of your frolic t'other night—you'll be in the *Chronicle*.' Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, 'He durst not do such a thing—his *wife* would not *let* him.' "

"Now, sir," said Sheridan, closing the volume, "here you have a sample of the philosophy of

your great literary monster—the great moral mentor of the age, and the devout and pious Christian in his teachings. I should have liked the frolic well enough, and could have heartily joined in it, but I could not have followed him into his closet, and have called upon my God in prayer to approve and sanctify my backslidings. He was a sordid sensualist; gross in his habits, his feeding was like that of a hog at the meal-tub; his appearance in good society that of a bear in armour—forced, strained, and unnatural. He believed in ghosts. He hated the Scotch, for no other reason than that the people were not united in favour of the Pretender, whose cause he secretly advocated in the '45. He hated the House of Hanover for a similar reason, and rendered the great work, his 'Dictionary,' subservient to the expression of his vindictiveness, his shallow egotism, and daring arrogance, in giving libellous definitions of certain words, corrupted to meet his own prejudices—libellous of the Government, which was not disposed to muzzle him with a bribe. To do him justice, sir, his 'Dictionary,' but for those blots, which impaired its value in a first edition, was a work of great value to our schools: it was a work of great and commendable labour—the labour of a millhorse—and had the extraordinary effect of converting a full-blown

Jacobin into a full-blooded Tory, by the security of a pension for life. I admire him for his learning, for his patient and enduring industry, for his poetry, his 'Rasselas,' and his miscellaneous productions, all tending to prove a refined taste and vast and comprehensive mind; but I could not suffer myself to be governed by his philosophy, to be influenced by his piety, or repose faith in his sincerity. He was a time-server, void of principle; he would bow to my lord, and give a kick to a beggar; take tea with Mrs. Thrale, and get drunk at the 'Mitre' or the 'Ship,' Billingsgate; then, staggering home to his lodgings, piously enter into confession, write down his own absolution in the form of a new prayer suitable for all occasions, and, being so whitewashed, prepare himself for new adventures on the morrow. You may smile, Peter; I grant you I could drink with him, and frisk with him, but I could not change my colours by becoming a state lackey, or, to use his own words in the definition of 'pension,' receive 'pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country.' No, sir; nor could I pray with him while in the commission of daily devilries, and blind myself in the belief that, by such nightly repentances and self-granted absolutions, I could secure to myself a clean bill of health and a safe passport to the other world, defying an ugly caption on the journey."

Sheridan's opinions of Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great lexicographer, were not in favour of his moral character; he questioned the sincerity of that man who, while he professed the utmost veneration for his mother, wantoned away twenty-three years of his life with youth and folly for his companions, when leisure from his literary pursuits granted him the free indulgence of his passions, but who could never find it convenient to visit his mother in her poverty and severe afflictions from the period of his first venture to the metropolis to the hour of her dissolution, nor was his affection for his wife more amiably displayed. Sheridan was a dutiful son, a tender husband, and a kind and indulgent father—these facts were evidenced in the conduct of his whole life; hence the severity of his strictures on Johnson founded on his own feelings with reference to necessary duties. He could not be brought to esteem the man, however great in literary ability, who could be found practically deficient in these moral obligations.

CHAPTER X.

DANGEROUS ILLNESS OF SHERIDAN.

It was the last of those delightful social evenings we enjoyed, the last on which the mind in the development of its powers remained undisturbed by that frightful malady which, assuming a more decided form, weakened his condition on the morrow. It appeared upon inquiry that he had passed a very quiet night, but awoke in the morning feverish and unrefreshed, with a slight sickness of the stomach, rejecting all aliment, even the medicine which had been ordered in relief. Bain was in attendance, and painfully observed that a great change had taken place within the last few hours. His speech was partially affected; still, the eye was bright and the countenance composed; he complained of thirst. He was not visible on that day: several calls had been made in the course of the morning, and Peter Moore made his accustomed visit in the evening; but, by the direction of Dr. Bain, the

sick chamber was not to be invaded; the next day, and the next followed, and it was not permitted that his quiet should be disturbed. It was now for the first time that the most serious apprehensions became excited. His appetite had wholly failed him; for three days his stomach had wholly rejected food of any sort. He remained almost in a continued doze, scarcely conscious of surrounding objects. On the fifth day he rallied somewhat under the influence of the medicine which his stomach had retained: he had also partaken of some refreshment which had been administered in a fluid form, and that so carefully and in such small proportions as to evidence the contraction of the muscles and the difficulty of swallowing. On the evening of that day we were admitted to his presence, but strongly cautioned against engaging him in a fatiguing conversation. Dr. Bain himself stood sentinel over us to enforce compliance with his serious injunctions; but we needed no such cautioning, the melancholy sight before us benumbed the faculty of speech and chilled the blood in our veins; for who could behold the brightest genius of the age wasting away in mortal suffering unmoved, or with less than a paralyzing emotion? Who, in that prostrate form, withering beneath the rigid grasp of a mortal's destiny, could contemplate but with awe the end

of expiring greatness! He held out his hand, it was pressed within my own; it was cold and clammy, but a smile struggled for mastery with the pains visible on his shrunken cheek, and his eye beamed with an unearthly brightness. He had earnestly entreated of Dr. Bain that no communication should be made to Mrs. Sheridan or his friends of the condition he was in unless circumstances should justify the proceeding; he wanted for nothing—for no aid that they could render. He felt that he was in good and careful hands, and he did not feel himself equal to the task of receiving condolences with doubtful hopes and equivocal assurances. "If it must be so, doctor," he said, with a sad, sad smile, "why, even let me pass away alone and unobserved; spare me the pain of excitement, and the revival of feelings which should be allowed to slumber to the end. The world and I have parted with each other; I feel that my lease is expiring." In obedience to this wish, so earnestly expressed, Bain had forborne to announce the situation of his patient while even a scintillation of hope remained justifying the omission. But there was no hope; human skill could avail but little, and that little only by protraction.

The 16th, the 17th, the 18th had arrived, no change had taken place for the better; but there

was nothing in appearances to indicate any further advance of the disease. Nine days had passed away since he had partaken of any refreshment in substance; life had been entirely sustained by liquid aliment, the swelling of the glands not permitting anything to pass but in a liquid form; frightful were the ravages of actual want, and the unsatisfied cravings of a real hunger, which could not be appeased by the inefficient but only means left to be employed. It was on the 18th day of the month of June, the anniversary of that memorable day on which the battle of Waterloo was fought, that Dr. Bain, seeing the inflammatory appearance of the throat was in abatement, entertained the idea of an operation. He put the question, "Have you ever undergone an operation, Mr. Sheridan?"

With that arch drollery which could not be repressed even under pain and suffering, Sheridan replied, "Yes; when sitting for my portrait, or to have my hair cut."

Bain's seriousness was somewhat disturbed; it was the chamber of death which wit enlivened—with one of those rays shooting forth in its brightness before the sun sinks beneath the shadows of the expiring day.

After the silence of a few minutes, during which interval Dr. Bain had been contemplating and

questioning the hazard of an operation, Sheridan, in a low tone of voice, said, "Well, doctor, prepare your lancet—I am ready; and if you succeed in conquering 'mine enemy,' you will obtain a greater victory than that of Wellington at Waterloo."

Upon consultation with Dr. Bailey, who held it as his opinion that the operation proposed might prove immediately fatal, the idea was abandoned and other means resorted to, to reduce the distension.

Among the morning calls of inquiry, which had considerably increased in number from the whisperings which had spread abroad, was that of the Countess of Bessborough. On her name being announced Sheridan desired her messenger to report that "His eyes would look up as brightly at his coffin lid as ever." Her ladyship, who was a great admirer of Sheridan, was known to extol the expressive beauty of his eyes.

On the 19th there was little alteration in his appearance, but on the 20th it was perceived that his mind began to wander—his lips to be affected by a convulsive quivering, and the whole expression of his countenance to indicate that he was sinking. Peter Moore, who had never failed in his attentions, felt that no time was to be lost in communicating to Mrs. Sheridan and

the members of her family the hopelessness of his situation. Mrs. Sheridan and her son Charles had not been resident of the house in Saville Row, and such had been the indomitable pride and firmness of purpose in resisting those aids which family and friends might have provided, that even in the last moments of consciousness he would have endeavoured to prevent the communication being made.

"There is no hope," said Dr. Bain to the inquiries of Peter Moore; "nothing can be done even to relieve him of his pains; consciousness is departing; and it is the blessing of Providence that he will shortly become insensible to all."

It was so; on the twenty-first day of the month he became wholly unconscious; his eye rested on vacancy, its brightness clouded, but still expressive of a feverish desire, while his pale lips were parted eagerly to receive the few slight drops continuously administered to allay the sharp pangs of hunger—the system preying on itself, it was only by such sparing means that the slender sustenance could be received supporting life; the action of the stomach was gone, and the passage so closed up that even fluids administered by drops, filtered as it were, could with difficulty find their way to the decayed organs of digestion. It was a melancholy sight, a most melancholy

sight, to see the wasting frame writhing in the agonies of hunger, craving, gasping—the countenance distorted by convulsions.

On the twenty-third day Mrs. Sheridan arrived with her son Charles, and one or two domestics; on being shown to the sick room she fainted—Sheridan alike insensible of her presence, or the terror he had excited. It was an awful scene! one which would have shaken the stoutest heart. Mrs. Sheridan herself was but in feeble health. Alas, alas! the thread of life was severing—the lamp of both was languishing—its flame flickering. With a fortitude but rarely seen, save in the zeal and tenderness of woman, she devoted herself to his pillow, exerting herself beyond her strength in the vain effort of mitigating his sufferings, and the futile hope which the sad appearance of hopelessness could not banish. He knew not the hand that pressed his own, saw not the eye streaming with tears that was bent on his; and in this state did he remain for ten anxious days, unconscious and wavering between life and death. On the tenth day his consciousness was restored, and a smile of recognition was the reward of so much tenderness and care.

CHAPTER XI.

DEATH OF SHERIDAN—THE FUNERAL—THE PRINCE REGENT AND PETER MOORE—BYRON'S MONODY—HIS REMARKS ON THE CHARACTER, GENIUS, AND ABILITY OF SHERIDAN—CONCLUSION.

THE last scene in the great drama of life was drawing to a close; the spirit was departing, the fiat had gone forth; restored to consciousness, he was also restored to a sense of the agonies under which he had been labouring. It was on the 2nd of July—he had passed a sad, sad night, one of intense pain with few intervals of relief; he was in a state of great exhaustion, but the hour had not yet arrived when those sufferings were to cease, and the closed eye announce the inevitable doom.

His countenance—that countenance so remarkable for its tenderness of expression and good humour, was changed; alas! how changed! distorted under the writhings of unutterable anguish, in which the strength of a once vigorous constitution was struggling with disease and failing

with every effort. Pain and the effects of pain were visible on that sunken cheek, and on that brow which had never knitted under oppression, or frowned upon the importunities of the unfortunate; pain in its most acute form had contracted there its harsh and forbidding lines, moist with the cold and deathlike drops of agony, which, as they became surcharged, welled down his hollow cheeks and fell upon the pillow on which he lay. Still, amid those rigid lines which continuous suffering had indented there, you might peruse the softer and more harmonious tracing of uncomplaining patience—fortitude in its endurance, and resignation in its calmness. There was no hope, and all of the world had faded from his mental gaze for ever. Conscious of his approaching end, he yielded himself unmurmuringly into the hands of the stern conductor destined to lead him through that narrow path bounding the line invisible between mortality and eternity. Death was not immediate, although slow and undisguised in its melancholy march, baffling all human skill—but the end was betokened in the beginning.

We had been sitting up with him for several nights, in relief of Mrs. Sheridan, who could scarcely be prevailed upon to leave his bedside; myself, with his faithful servant Farebrother—Bob Farebrother, as he was familiarly called, who had

lived with him in his happier hours, and preserving his fidelity, had shared with him those which had been shorn of their brightness. We had another associate in the person of one Thomas Hurst, a sheriff's officer, whose name deserves to be recorded for a kindness of heart and benevolence of feeling which we believe is rarely to be met with among the members of his profession. He was in the custody of his person, happily, on a writ issued at the time when the invalid was in a state of unconsciousness, and had become his custodian; and fortunate it was for the dying man, for in that character he became his protector against any other suit which might be instituted against him.

It must be remarked that Sheridan kept up no domestic establishment, and Mrs. Sheridan came accompanied only by her own maid. We were his only attendants; mine only occasional, when I called in Saville Row, and in relief of Mrs. Sheridan, when she could be prevailed upon to retire to her own chamber for that rest which, in her infirm state of health, she much needed.

It was evident, on the one hand, that he was sinking; while, on the other, a slight hope gleamed through the darkness from his partaking more freely and with less difficulty of nutrition. His voice was very faint and low, feeble but clear,

but he had a perfect understanding, and on the Thursday (the 4th) prior to his decease, he was raised in a reclining posture in his bed, to receive Mrs. Sheridan privately and alone; the doors were closed upon them, with no one to witness the passing scene; but the dishevelled hair that strayed wildly down her shoulders, the throbbing bosom, the swollen eyes, the tears that had moistened her cheeks ere she passed from that chamber, told the tale which no language could have uttered with all its eloquence.

On the following day, the holy sacrament was administered by a clergyman of the Church of England, of which they both partook with the becoming fervour of good Christians; and when that solemn ceremony was ended, such was the deathlike stillness of that house of mourning, one would have thought the messenger had arrived, and with the object of his mission had departed. On that night his rest was undisturbed; he lay tranquil and composed, his breathing unobstructed, and his eyes, which had been affected by fever, were restored to something like their former brightness. On the following day, Saturday, he conversed occasionally with clearness and precision. In the evening of that day, Mrs. Sheridan and he were alone together, alone and unobserved; they sat for hours; it was near mid-

night ere they parted. Peter Moore called, left his card, and promised to call to-morrow; we left together; there was no service we could render.

On the morrow, Sunday, the 7th, I had engaged to breakfast with Peter Moore, in Great George Street, and then to accompany him to Saville Row. We arrived there about eleven; the bells had ceased ringing for church service as we passed up St. James's Street. Peter Moore called in at Brooks's, and also at White's, to communicate Sheridan's hopeless state. It was half-past eleven when we arrived in Saville Row, and heard the confirmation of our worst fears. We were admitted to his presence, shadowed by death. He had said "Good-bye"—it was about nine o'clock that morning; since then his lips had been sealed—they were his last words. The clock of St. George's struck twelve, and his spirit passed away. He WAS, and he IS not.

Peter Moore took upon himself the conduct of the funeral of the distinguished dead, and the body, deposited in a shell, was conveyed to his house in Great George Street, Westminster, for convenience.

FUNERAL.

On Saturday, July 13th, the mortal remains of this great and distinguished man were conveyed to their final resting-place, in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, from the house of Peter Moore, in Great George Street, Westminster, to which place they had been removed for the convenience of the royal and distinguished personages who had announced their intention of taking part in the funeral obsequies, and paying their last homage to the memory of the man—a homage due to his commanding genius, to his great merits, and his unequalled patriotism. The most distinguished of our nobility, discarding all of party feeling, united in this demonstration of public sympathy, and upon no former occasion of a similar nature had a procession been formed of all that was noble in birth and rank, united with members of all professions, and of friends who truly grieved. It was a glorious tribute to departed worth.

Charles Brinsley Sheridan, Esq., his son, attended as chief mourner, accompanied by Henry Ogle, Esq., Henry Streathfield, Esq., the Hon. E. Bouverie, and Gen. Sir Charles Asgil, members of the Ogle family.

Pall Bearers.

The Dukes of Bedford and Argyll.
The Earls of Lauderdale and Mulgrave.
The Lord Bishop of London and Lord Holland.

Mourners.

His Royal Highness the Duke of York.
His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex.

The Marquis of Anglesey	The Hon. Douglas Kinnaird
The Marquis of Douglas	The Hon. Thomas Brand
The Marquis of Tavistock	Lieutenant-Gen. Phipps
The Earl of Thanet	Sir Thomas Stepney, Bart.
The Earl of Jersey	Sir Thomas Mostyn, Bart.
The Earl of Harrington	Sir Everard Home, Bart.
The Earl of Bessborough	Sir Ronald Fergusson, K.C.B.
The Earl of Roxburgh	Sir Arthur Pigott
The Earl of Rosslyn	Sir Samuel Romilly
The Earl of Yarmouth	Sir Benjamin Bloomfield
Lord George Cavendish	Colonel Hughes, M.P.
Lord Robert Spencer	Michael Angelo Taylor, M.P.
Lord Viscount Sidmouth	Peter Moore, Esq., M.P.
Lord Viscount Granville	Owen Williams, Esq., M.P.
Lord Viscount Petersham	Captain Bennett, R.N.
Lord Viscount Duncannon	Dr. Bain
Lord Rivers	Dr. Hume
Lord Erskine	Messrs. Adair, Rogers, Smyth,
Lord Lynedoch	Vaughan, Dennison, Talbot,
The Lord Mayor of London	Hobhouse, Davis, Earle,
The Rt. Hon. George Canning	A. Graham, Linley, Ward,
The Rt. Hon. W. W. Pole	Metcalfe, Burgess, W. Grey,
The Hon. L. Stanhope	Peake, Perry, Lane, P. Wil-
The Hon. W. Lamb	liams, Rev. C. Williams,
The Hon. George Lamb	Rae, Bradley, Wyatt,—

with nearly the whole of the principal performers of the Theatres Royal Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and the gentlemen connected with the press. The whole line of the procession was densely crowded with spectators, preserving the

greatest order and decorum, and to all appearance deeply impressed with the solemnity of the ceremony. Blessings were poured out on the coffin as it passed, and half-suppressed tears and lamentations of the many testified to his worth. The good-natured man had passed away from among the living; but his charities, which had been administered with unsparing hand until he himself had been reduced to need, stood now confessed, attested to by tears.

The procession was so lengthened that the bier had actually passed into the Abbey ere the train had been fully formed in George Street. The funeral service was read by the sub-dean, Dr. Fynes, with solemn and impressive effect, drawing tears from eyes that were not used to weep. The coffin was covered with black velvet, with rich and costly ornaments in gold; the plate on the lid contained this simple inscription:—

"THE RIGHT HON. RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.
DIED
July 7th, 1816,
Aged 65."

The death of Sheridan was severely felt by the Prince Regent; it called back to memory past days with many a painful reproof upon himself, and it is but in justice to his Royal Highness to

avouch, on the authority of Mr. Peter Moore, who had daily communication at Carlton Palace during the progressive arrangements for the funeral, that it was conducted under his superintending directions, and that on the day of the ceremonial he remained within his own closet accessible to no one but Mr. Moore himself on his return from the Abbey. "He listened," said Moore, "with the greatest interest to the details, and made many remarks, exhibiting a feeling which I had never given him credit for. 'He was a great man, Mr. Moore,' he said, 'but in the simplicity of his nature he never knew his own greatness. His heart was too much enlarged to be governed by his head. He had an abounding confidence in every man; and although his pen indicated a knowledge of human nature, yet that knowledge was confined to his pen alone, for in all his acts he rendered himself the dupe of the fool and designing knave,'—to all which I cordially assented."

"'Be assured, Mr. Moore,' he continued, 'I never knew the real condition of Mr. Sheridan's affairs until within a month of that unhappy event, which we all so seriously deplore; but if we had known it, we question whether the event itself could have been averted by any means within our power—human aid can render but little in such cases. He was a proud man, sir, a

very proud man, with certain conscientious scruples always operating against his own interests. He was a firm friend and a sound adviser; but he was so systematically jealous of his own honour that he was always willing to grant what he was not willing to solicit in return—favours, which might be interpreted as affecting his own independence!'—to all which again I most cordially assented. And here our interview closed. I looked upon all he said as apologetic; and as I hardly deemed them sufficient, I took my leave."

On the re-opening of the Drury Lane theatrical season, on the seventh day of the following month of September, the "School for Scandal" was performed in compliment to the memory of its author, on which occasion Mr. Rae delivered a monody from the pen of Lord Byron, which was listened to with the deepest attention, and that silent applause—that solemn silence which bore its testimony to the merits of its composition, and the tribute offered to the illustrious dead. The house was filled in every part with an audience attracted on the occasion to witness the undying power of his matchless pen and listen to the solemn requiem pronounced at the temple of his early fame. And can it be that such men die? Alas for poor mortality! But his spirit lives! we see it in the breathings of his eloquence—in that deathless

wit—the embodiment of thought, and that ripe conception by which the stage is sustained in its dignity as an art, and the memory of the man is embalmed for future ages to enlighten and improve. We give the monody entire:—

MONODY

ON THE DEATH OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE R. B. SHERIDAN.

When the last sunshine of expiring day
In summer's twilight weeps itself away,
Who hath not felt the softness of the hour
Sink on the heart, as dew along the flower,
With a pure feeling which absorbs and awes,
While nature makes that melancholy pause;
Her breathing moment on the bridge where Time
Of light and darkness forms an arch sublime?
Who hath not shared that calm so still and deep,
The voiceless thought which could not speak but weep,—
A holy concord, and a bright regret,
A glorious sympathy with suns that set?
'Tis not harsh sorrow, but a tender woe,
Nameless, but dear to gentle hearts below;
Felt without bitterness, but full and clear;
A sweet dejection—a transparent tear
Unmix'd with worldly grief, or selfish stain,
Shed without shame, and secret without pain.

Even as the tenderness that hour instils
When Summer's day declines along the hills,
So feels the fulness of our heart and eyes
When all of genius which can perish dies.

A mighty spirit is eclipsed—a power
Hath pass'd from day to darkness, to whose hour
Of light no likeness is bequeathed—no name,
Focus at once of all the rays of fame!
The flash of wit, the bright intelligence,
The beam of song, the blaze of eloquence,
Set with their sun—but still have left behind
The enduring produce of immortal mind;
Fruits of a genial morn and glorious noon,
A deathless path of him who died too soon.
But small that portion of the wondrous whole,
These sparkling segments of that circling soul,
Which all embraced and lightened over all,
To cheer, to pierce, to please, or to appal;
From the charm'd council to the festive board,
Of human feelings the unbounded lord,
In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied—
The praised, the proud, who make his praise their pride.
When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,
His was the thunder, his the avenging rod—
The wrath, the delegated voice of God!
Which shook the nations through his lips, and blazed
Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised.

And here, oh, here! where yet, all young and warm,
The gay creations of his spirit charm,—

The matchless dialogue, the deathless wit
Which knew not what it was to intermit,
The glowing portraits fresh from life that bring
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring,
These wondrous beings of his fancy wrought
To fulness by the fiat of his thought,
There, in their first abode, you still may meet,
Bright with the hues of his Promethean heat,
A halo of the light of other days
Which still the splendour of its orb betrays.

But should there be to whom the fatal blight
Of failing wisdom yields a base delight—
Men who exult when minds of heavenly tone
Jar in the music which was born their own—
Still let them pause—ah! little do they know
That what to them seemed vice might be but woe.

Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fixed for ever, to detract or praise;
Repose denies her requiem to his name,
And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame.
The secret enemy, whose sleepless eye
Stands sentinel, accuser, judge, and spy;
The foe, the fool, the jealous, and the vain;
The envious, who but breathe in others' pain:
Behold the host! delighting to deprave,
Who track the steps of Glory to the grave,
Watch every fault that daring genius owes
Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,
And pile the pyramid of calumny!

These are his portion; but if, joined to these,
Gaunt poverty should league with deep disease;
If the high spirit must forget to soar,
And stoop to strive with misery at the door,
To soothe indignity, and face to face
Meet sordid Rage, and wrestle with Disgrace;
To find in Hope but the renewed caress,
The serpent-fold of further faithlessness—
If such may be the ills which men assail,
What marvel if at last the mightiest fail?
Breasts to whom all the strength of feeling given,
Bear hearts electric, charged with fire from heaven;
Black with the rude collision, inly torn,
By clouds surrounded, and on whirlwinds borne,
Driven o'er the louring atmosphere that nursed [burst.
Thoughts which have turned to thunder, scorch and

But far from us, and from our mimic scene,
Such things should be, if such have ever been:
Ours be the gentler wish, the kinder task,
To give the tribute Glory need not ask;
To mourn the vanished beam, and add our mite
Of praise in payment of a long delight.

Ye orators, whom yet our councils yield,
Mourn for the veteran hero of your field!
The worthy rival of the wondrous Three,*
Whose words were sparks of immortality.
Ye bards, to whom the drama's muse is dear,
He was your master—emulate him *here!*

* Fox, Pitt, Burke.

Ye men of wit and social eloquence,
He was your brother—bear his ashes hence!
While powers of mind almost of boundless range,
Complete in kind as various in their change;
While eloquence, wit, poesy, and mirth,
That humbler harmonist of care on earth,
Survive within our souls, while lives our sense
Of pride in merit's proud pre-eminence.
Long shall we seek his likeness, long in vain,
And turn to all of him which may remain,
Sighing that Nature formed but one such man,
And broke the die, in moulding Sheridan!

EXTRACT FROM LORD BYRON'S LETTERS.

"Whatever Sheridan has done or chosen to do has been, *par excellence*, always the best of its kind. He has written the best comedy, 'The School for Scandal;' the best opera, 'The Duenna' (in my mind far before that St. Giles's lampoon, 'The Beggars' Opera'); the best farce, 'The Critic'—it is only too good for a farce; and the best address, the 'Monologue on Garrick;' and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration, the famous Begum speech, ever conceived or heard in this country.

"In society I have met Sheridan frequently. He was superb. He had a sort of liking for me,

and never attacked me, at least to my face, and he did everybody else—high names, and wits, and orators, some of them poets also. I have seen him cut up Whitbread, quiz Madame de Stael, annihilate Colman, and do little less by some others (whose names, as friends, I set not down) of good fame and ability.

"The last time I met him was, I think, at Sir Gilbert Heathcote's, where he was as quick as ever; no; it was not the last time—the last time was at Douglas Kinnaird's.

"I have met him in all places and parties—at Whitehall with the Melbournes, at the Marquis of Tavistock's, at Robins, the auctioneer's, at Sir Humphry Davy's, at Sam Rogers'; in short, in most kinds of company, and always found him very convivial and delightful.

"I have seen Sheridan weep two or three times. It may be he was maudlin, but this only renders it more impressive; for who would see

> 'From Marlborough's eyes the tears of dotage flow,
> And swift expire a driveller and a show.'

Once I saw him cry at Robins, the auctioneer's, after a splendid dinner, full of great names and high spirits; I had the honour of sitting next to Sheridan. The occasion of his tears was some observation or other upon the subject of the stur-

diness of the Whigs in resisting office and keeping to their principles. Sheridan turned round: 'Sir, it is easy for my Lord G., or Earl G., or Marquis of B., or Lord H., with thousands upon thousands a-year, some of it either *presently* derived or inherited, in sinecure or acquisitions from the public money, to boast of their patriotism and keep aloof from temptation, but they do not know from what temptation those have kept aloof who had equal pride, at least equal talents, and not unequal passions, and nevertheless knew not in the course of their lives what it was to have a shilling of their own.' And in saying this, he wept.

"I have more than once heard him say that he 'never had a shilling of his own.' To be sure he contrived to extract a great many of other people's.

"In 1815 I had occasion to visit my lawyer in Chancery Lane; he was with Sheridan. After mutual greetings, &c., Sheridan retired first. Before recurring to my own business, I could not help inquiring that of Sheridan. 'Oh,' replied the attorney, 'the usual thing—to stave off an action from his wine-merchant, my client!' 'Well,' said I, 'and what do you mean to do?' 'Nothing at all for the present,' said he; 'would you have us proceed against old Sherry? What

would be the use of it?' And here he began laughing, and going over Sheridan's good gifts of conversation.

"Now, from personal experience, I can vouch that my attorney is by no means the tenderest of men, or particularly accessible to any kind of impression out of the statute or record, and yet Sheridan had in half an hour found the way to soften and seduce him in such a manner that I almost think he would have thrown his client (an honest man, with all the law and justice on his side) out of the window, had he come in at the moment.

"Such was Sheridan!—he could soften an attorney! There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus.

"One day I saw him take up his own Monody on Garrick. He lighted upon the dedication to the Dowager Lady Spencer. On seeing it he flew into a rage, and exclaimed 'that it must be a forgery—that he had never dedicated anything of his to such a d—d canting,' &c. &c.; and so he went on for at least half an hour, abusing his own dedication, at least the object of it. If all writers were equally sincere, it would be ludicrous.

"He told me that on the night of the grand success of his 'School for Scandal,' he was knocked

down and taken to the watch-house for making a row in the street and being found intoxicated by the watchmen."

While we cannot but admire the sincerity of Lord Byron in the manliness of his remarks, and the truthful picture he has so forcibly and briefly drawn of Sheridan from his own observation, we feel it our duty to correct an error into which his lordship has fallen, from a misunderstanding of what Sheridan meant to convey when he said that he had never had a shilling of "his own in his life." No author was ever more successful or more largely remunerated for the productions of his pen than Richard Brinsley Sheridan: what he meant to convey to his lordship was, that he had entered into life alone and unassisted, and that he had never derived one shilling which he could call his own but from his own exertions.

In the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey a plain stone covers his grave, with the inscription,

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

BY HIS FRIEND

PETER MOORE.

LONDON: J. F. HOPE, 16, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

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